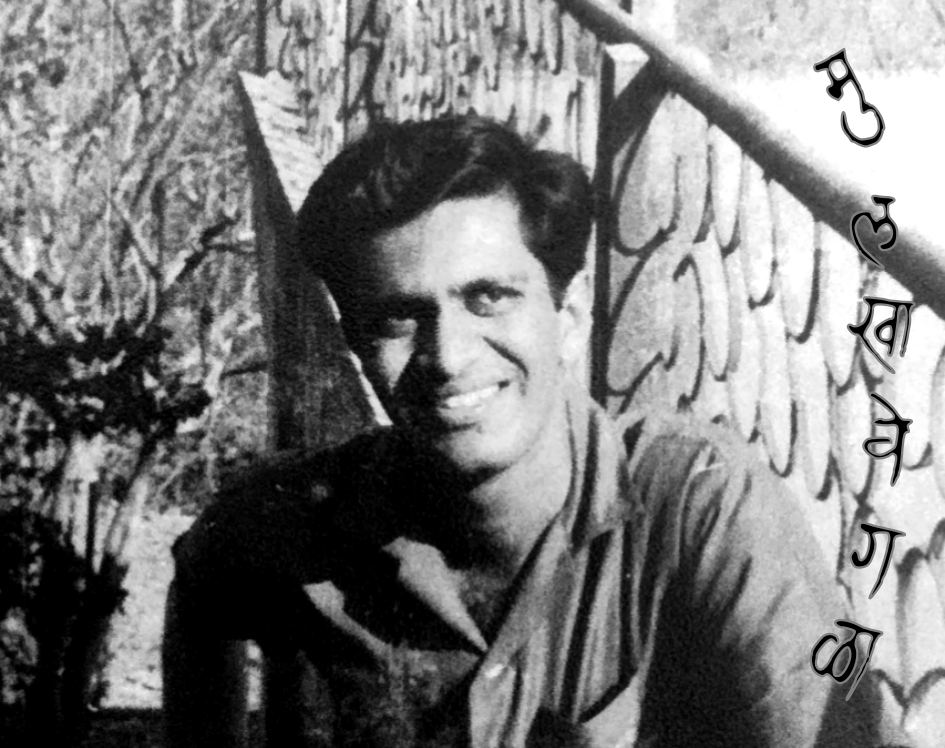




Anil Havaladar

The man who
translated
Soviet and
Russian
Books in
Marathi

Anil Havaladar

**The man who translated Soviet and Russian
Books in Marathi**

2026

Based on Anil Havaladar's Marathi autobiography
Mulkhawegala.

Front cover photo: Anil Havaladar during his younger days.
Typeset by *Damitr*.

Contents

Mulkhawegla — Anil Havaladar	v
Introduction	vii
A Brief Account of Early Life	1
Pune	3
School and College Years	4
Years with Theatre	6
Adventures with Producing Plays for Amateur Theatre	10
The Film Industry Experience	13
A Job with the Russians	20
Making of the Film	26
Interlude: Waiting for the Invitation to the USSR	31
The Very Busy Pre-departure Period	35
Finally — to Moscow	37
Settling Down in the Office	41

Contents

Tamara	49
Leningrad	54
Winter	59
Beginning of Summer — and the Tashkent Film Festival	65
A Very Eventful Period	72
A Short Visit to Pune — and then to Odessa Studios	76
Moscow Film Festivals	80
Documentaries, Tashkent Film Festival and Contract Renewal	82
Pune Visits and a Trip to Trinidad & Tobago	87
Expanding the Social Circle in Moscow	92
Marriage Plans — and Hiccups During Contract Renewal	95
A Visit to Kiev	101
Anil Weds Tamara	103

An Enjoyable Visit to India with Tamara	105
The Varna Film Festival	109
Anil Joins Raduga	111
A Visit to Georgia and Armenia	117
Acting in a Film in the Gorky Studio, Moscow	120
The Russian Approach to Rest	123
Mumbai-Kovalam-Singapore-Bangkok	124
Shifting to a New Apartment	126
Illness Strikes a Serious Blow	131
Life Takes a New Turn	143
Divorce, Resignation and Goodbye to Moscow	155
Back Home	163
Mauritius	167
Settling Down in Pune	170
Na Pasashok	173

Contents

Reposez en Paix Baba! 175

List of Anil Havaladar's Translations 177

Mulkhawegla — Anil Havaladar

We were star-crossed, my father and I... he and my mother separated when I was just a few months old and as circumstances would have it, we never visited each other's homes even once. I knew him as my handsome, suave and charming Baba who came to India after every 1.5 years, who wrote me brief, boring letters about the Russian climate very regularly, who bought me beautiful toys, frocks, chocolates and watches when I was little and perfumes, shampoos, cosmetics and lovely Czechoslovakian crystal glasses when I was older. My first sip of Veuve Cliquot champagne and Russian caviar on my 16th birthday is etched in my memory even today! He was so very proud of my achievements and made efforts to get to know me and my life in many ways!

He worked really hard to escape the drudgery and poverty of his early days, to make something worthwhile of himself that would make his father and his daughter proud! I remember accompanying him to visit his friends in India, some of them quite famous, where everyone would gather around him as he spoke eloquently about life in Russia, his interesting travels, about snippets from the entertainment industry. It is true that he developed excellent friendships over the years and his friends stood by him through very difficult periods. He had exquisite taste and even today, when I buy something beautiful, I always think about how

much he would have appreciated it! But his personal and professional life in Russia remained mostly an unknown aspect for me and I have discovered most of it through his autobiography *Mulkhawegla* in recent times.

Anil primarily refers to a Sanskrit-derived masculine name meaning “God of air/wind” or a Turkish name meaning ‘remembered’. In this context, I am deeply touched by the efforts of Mr. Arvind Gupta and Mr. N.V. Joshi, to remember through this book, the late Anil Havaladar, more than 25 years after his untimely demise, so as to give him due credit for his monumental contribution to the bond between Soviet/Russian and Marathi literature.

I am sure that the readers of this book will enjoy this interesting glimpse into the life of Anil Havaladar and his multiple journeys into acting, theatre, films, script-writing, journalism, translation, travels, friendships ... the list goes on...

Jui Dabir

Introduction

Translating over 100 books from Russian to Marathi has to be regarded as a stupendous accomplishment — and more so if it covers as wide a range as children's books, books on politics, literary works of world-famous authors like Maxim Gorky! It is therefore very puzzling that the name of Mr. Anil Havaladar — the translator, remains virtually unknown (the obscurity unfortunately compounded by the almost complete disappearance of these Russian books from the market — one sad consequence of the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1990!).

The operative phrase here is 'the translator'. To the moviegoers, theatregoers, readers of major Marathi magazines in the 1960s-70s-80s, Anil Havaladar the actor, writer, columnist specializing in travelogues must have been very well known. It is possible that Mr. Havaladar would not be too unhappy about this either — acting and writing were his major passions (in addition to making friends, travelling, whiskey, women — not necessarily in that order). I hasten to clarify that the phrase in the parenthesis is not a snide swipe at him, but something gleaned from his superbly written, extremely candid and most fascinating autobiography *Mulakhawegla*. The very apt title can be loosely translated as (someone) "very-very extraordinary", or "way off the beaten track", or "strikingly different from the rest". An-

Introduction

other slightly sad meaning is ‘one who is away from one’s hometown’.

A Brief Account of Early Life

Anil was born on 24th June 1941 in Malvan, Konkan, on the west coast of Maharashtra in his maternal grandfather Mr. Dattopant Malwankar's house. His mother was Mandakini Havaladar née Malwankar and father was Mr. Shrikrishna Havaladar.

Part of Anil's early childhood was spent in Malvan, and part in Kolhapur where his father had a job as a clerk with PWD. Mr. Shrikrishna Havaladar, however, was very ambitious, progressive, with slightly leftist leanings but he did not impose his political or other views on anyone. He was keen that his son becomes somebody special, not just ordinary, that he should become well-known, not necessarily very rich, but should be very well-educated, in fact should become famous for erudition. Subsequently, he wanted Anil to become an actor, and he tried hard to make that happen. This may have been because Mr. Shrikrishna Havaladar's school teachers included Gajanan Jagirdar and Master Vinayak, who became very well-known and respected screen personalities.

One other thing that Anil's father did was to inculcate a passion for travelling all over the world in Anil's mind. A map was hung on one of the walls and he used to show Russia and America to Anil and tell him that he should study in England and visit these countries. He also made

A Brief Account of Early Life

Anil develop an interest in reading by giving him a book as a birthday gift on all his birthdays — from class 7 to class 12.

Unfortunately, this had to be discontinued because of financial difficulties.

In addition to his job in PWD, Anil's father worked part time in a film theatre. So, even before going to school, Anil had seen many films, that too free of cost, and by sitting in the projection room.

Around the time when the second world war ended, Anil's father accomplished something extremely remarkable. He translated into Marathi the book *Prison Days of Naini* by Mrs. Krishna Hathisingh, sister of Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru. Mr. Shrikrishna Havaladar was extremely happy that a very reputed publisher, Continental in Pune, published the book. He gifted away more than one hundred copies of the book to various people — and finally was left with none for himself.

Buoyed by the success of the book, Mr. Shrikrishna Havaladar decided to become a full-time writer, and to relocate to Pune for that. This was possible because Anil's maternal grandfather had also moved to Pune and taken a job there. This took place when Anil was about 6–7-years old. He remembers riding in a train pulled by a steam locomotive.

Pune

Immediately on settling down in Pune, Anil was admitted to the third standard in a school in Deccan Gymkhana. On the very first day when he entered the school, a boy by the name of Anil Kelkar invited him to sit next to him. The friendship that began on that day continued lifelong! (There were six boys named Anil in his class). A very notable influence has been his friend Anil Kelkar's father — who would treat his son's friends as his own. In fact, when Anil reached 18 years of age, Mr. Kelkar Senior offered him a peg of whiskey. This was the first time ever that Anil tasted a drink and that too in noble company! From that time onwards, it became his habit to drink openly - not stealthily! Interestingly, he never had a drink during his years with the theatre and the film industry, and started only after the age of 27, after getting a well-paid job with the Information Division of the Russian Consulate, after marriage. He preferred to drink regularly, but abhorred and detested getting drunk and all associated uncivilized behaviour. Drinking with friends, in a peaceful atmosphere, while engaged in discussions on literature, arts and the like, engaging in intellectual exchanges etc is what he really liked. He says that though all say that drinking is harmful — he himself has always benefitted greatly in his life because of whisky; he could make many friends and could get many opportunities to travel all over the world. Whenever he visited a new city, he always made it a habit to

A Brief Account of Early Life

look for some good bars! Quoting a Russian proverb "It is better to have 100 friends than having 100 roubles in your pocket," he used to tell his Russian friends "Not only do I have 100 roubles, but I have a hundred friends, each one worth a million - so I am a billionaire!"

School and College Years

These years were fraught with serious financial difficulties. His father's job as a journalist was not a well-paying one, and expenses incurred due to his mother's ill-health were substantial. Anil was good in his studies, especially languages, and that helped him to get a freeship. For other expenses, he had to earn money by selling notebooks to other students in the school and other such sundry means. He also had to face some humiliating experiences because of lack of money.

However, there were other compensations — he would get free passes for films and plays because his father would write reviews for the newspaper. His father's handwriting was not very good, so often Anil's mother, or Anil's sister or Anil had to do the writing. Anil began to share most of this workload, and this soon resulted in his father entrusting him with even the responsibility of writing many of these reviews — though they were published under the name of his father. Anil had a passion for reading widely, had a

command over the language and a natural flair for writing — so even the responsibility of writing articles to various magazines to which Anil's father was a regular contributor slowly fell on his shoulders — and this secret remained completely within the family. Some of the articles were about famous English films — and as a result and because of Mr. Shrikrishna Havaladar's reputation as a film critic and his contacts with other writers, Anil's father started getting assignments from the US consulate and the Russian consulate for translating books. The money was badly needed, and Anil's father could not handle all this work — but Anil showed himself to be very competent in handling this responsibility too. He wryly mentions that had he submitted his writings under his own name, there would have been no chance of them being published; they were accepted only because they were submitted under the name "Shrikrishna Havaladar"! However, the fact that the publishers and readers were happy with the writings gave him enormous satisfaction as well as confidence in his own abilities as a writer and a translator.

Notwithstanding these successes, his first love continued to be acting and theatre!

Years with Theatre

The opportunity to act in a play came to Anil very early, when he was just in the fourth standard in school; he had acted as an old man in a mythological play. This was followed up by acting in a Sanskrit play later — and provided opportunities for bunking classes under the pretext of practising for plays that were to be presented in annual functions. This continued during college years as well. He even became the Drama Secretary of the college. His comedy roles in two of the plays in the annual functions of the college were big hits. He was also very innovative and imaginative — he included child artists in the plays performed in the college functions; one of these child artists was Rohini Hattangadi, who subsequently became very famous as stage and screen actress (particularly for Kasturba's role in David Attenborough's *Gandhi*). To Anil Havaladar goes the credit of offering her the very first opportunity to act on stage! As subsequent events will show, he was not only completely hooked by theatre but even became a professional theatre actor.

He made many attempts to get a role in professional theatre by regularly visiting producers of plays — without much success. Finally, and rather unexpectedly, he got an opportunity because one actor suddenly left, and many performances were already scheduled. He confidently prepared

for the hero's role in just three days. The producer, director and co-stars were impressed and happy. The performances took place in many towns in Maharashtra, and his role was always well-appreciated. The payment was poor (Rs. 20 per night), travelling was always by trains, in crowded third class compartments — this was true even for very senior and established actors. This made Anil strengthen his resolve to become financially successful in life; he did not believe in sacrifices for serving the stage!

Things did not work out too well — the opportunities were fewer, the remuneration per night even decreased to Rs 15 per night. In the meanwhile, he had realized that his voice was not suitable for the stage because of the bone in his nose being a little too large, and he underwent a surgery to correct that. This involved some expenses. He had in the meanwhile joined to study for a BA degree with English and Marathi — because his ambition was to become an IAS officer. He had to request his father for money to pay for the examination fees. Probably for the first time, his father strongly scolded him for not having studied properly. This upset him terribly — the traditional father vs son conflict escalated, and he decided to burn his bridges and announced his resolve of not continuing his education and of making a career as an actor.

Luckily, an opportunity came his way almost immediately to act in a new play. The remuneration of Rs. 30 per night made him happy — but the requirement of having to

stay in Mumbai for a few weeks was a formidable problem. Luckily, Anil's remarkable ability of forming strong friendships came in handy and his friends willingly allowed him to stay with them; the parents of his friends were also very helpful — yet another facet of Anil's ability to get along very well with others.

This opportunity was most valuable in many ways. He formed a strong bond of friendship with the noted actor-director Shri Gajananrao Jagirdar, a doyen of Marathi stage and of Hindi and Marathi films. As mentioned earlier, Jagirdar had worked earlier as a schoolteacher and Anil's father was his student in that school. This connection helped cement their relationship to the extent that Anil started calling him 'Papa'! He also had a chance to meet and become friendly with many other stage and film personalities during these years — either because they were his co-stars, or because he used to frequently meet writers and directors with the hope of getting roles in plays and films — though without much success.

This continued for several years — and he gained a lot of experience by acting in a number of plays, in various roles, performed across Maharashtra. He also acted as a dancer in a Hindi play. At one point, the only job that came his way was looking after the lighting and background music for a play — and he used that opportunity to learn the associated technical details as well. Due to various unexpected reasons (e.g., unseasonal rains on the day of the performance),

the plays could not succeed financially, and he was unable to earn much. He could manage only because staying and eating at home meant that he did not have to spend anything on food and accommodation! He gratefully writes, however, that his father not even once made any adverse comment about this situation. Mr. Shrikrishna Havaladar could see how talented his son was, and he was sure that someday, Anil would become a well-known theatre and film personality.

While in Pune, Anil used to watch Hollywood films very regularly. Actors like Erol Flynn, Spencer Tracy, Cary Grant were his heroes. Dreaming along these lines, he slowly became increasingly bored with his current employment. He also felt unhappy with the post-performance drunkenness that was the habit of many of his colleagues including that of the producer of the play. As a result of all this, he decided to discontinue this mode of life, and resigned from the company on 31st December — planning a new career in the New Year. However, he and the producer parted on good terms. Anil makes it a point to mention that the producer always treated him well and when Anil's role involved wearing a suit, affectionately used to address him as "Hello Anilovasky" — an unusual term that seemed to foreshadow Anil's subsequent tryst and long inning in Russia, translating many Russian books into Marathi!

Adventures with Producing Plays for Amateur Theatre

In collaboration with some like-minded friends, he started a company named *Bhavabhuti Theatre*. The beginning was good; they got a play (titled *One's Fate*) from a reputed and popular writer, the cast practised well, and the tickets for the inaugural show scheduled on a Sunday in mid-July of 1961 sold well. However, one's fate intervened in a major way — 12th July 1961 was the date of the devastating flood that wiped out hundreds of thousands of homes in Pune! The next few weeks were spent in clearing away the mud! The play was eventually performed, because the tickets already sold. The company folded soon after that.

While attempts to search for jobs continued, Anil got an opportunity to write regularly for a magazine. Not only did that provide some money but led to a lifelong friendship with one Mr. Shinde, a photographer of international repute, who was also associated with that magazine. Though much older than Anil, he treated Anil as a close friend; he also turned out to be an excellent mentor. Through him, Anil was exposed to many interesting English books (particularly autobiographies of famous actors). Through Mr. Shinde, he also met many interesting people. In the meanwhile, he got an opportunity to write a regular column

in the famous Marathi magazine *Manohar*, about people with unusual hobbies. Not only did this provide the much-needed money but also honed his skills as a writer adept at writing on a wide range of topics.

The connection with theatre was re-established with another offer from a new company with attractive terms: a regular salary of Rs. 200 per month regardless of the performances, perks like travel by second class (those days, economy class of railways was called third class) etc. He jumped at the offer, joined the company, practised well and everything worked out, till once again, on the day of the first performance, 24th November 1963, the day that Lee Harvey Oswald chose to assassinate President of USA John Kennedy — and all shows had to be cancelled. Subsequent shows went off well and the company was scheduled to a long tour of Vidarbha. Anil, however, in the meanwhile became rather apprehensive about joining the tour because many of the co-actors were addicted to smoking Ganja (hashish) — and occasionally, even appeared on the stage partially stoned. Luckily, he got an urgent offer-cum-request for performing in a play with his former theatre company because one of the actors there suddenly fell ill. Anil jumped at the opportunity, telling the present company that he would go and perform there and be back for the tour — though he had no intentions of returning. When he returned home after that performance, he himself fell ill — so there was no question of rejoining. He never heard of

Adventures with Producing Plays for Amateur Theatre

what happened to that company afterwards!

A new chapter was about to open in his life — acting in Marathi films!

The Film Industry Experience

Anil's continued efforts to get an opportunity to act in films finally bore fruit. He was invited to the famous Prabhat studio for a small role. He was overjoyed and thankful. His role was that of an old man, so his hair had to be dyed white — and the elderly but famous actor who had the hero's role was getting his hair dyed black at the same time — an irony not lost on Anil! He also took the opportunity to write an article in the newspaper about a fellow child artist Sachin Pilgaonkar — who rose to great fame as an actor in films subsequently.

Anil continued to aspire for bigger roles, however, and responded to an advertisement for a new Marathi film that was seeking new faces. Luckily, he was selected for the role of the 'second' hero; the then leading star Arun Sarnaik being the main hero. This was a tiring but very rewarding experience — involving shooting throughout the night, shooting on different locations etc. Anil the author continued to write about these experiences in some leading Marathi weeklies and his articles were well-appreciated. In fact, the director of the film was so impressed with the writing that he requested Anil to write some of dialogues for the film. Anil of course readily accepted the offer, handling the assignment successfully and with ease.

One continues to see this pattern of alternating good and

The Film Industry Experience

bad periods in Anil's life. The shooting of the film "This is called Love" took two years to complete. He kept himself occupied through his writing, and sundry roles in plays. The film was finally released in Mumbai. He went for the premier by himself. In the credit titles, his name was listed as "Anil — a new face". His scenes were to appear only after the interval. His senior friend, Shri Gajanan Jagirdar, jokingly remarked at the interval that he saw only Anil's name but not his face. His ill luck struck just after the interval!

Something had gone wrong with the camera when his scenes were filmed; his face looked very odd in the screen, to the extent that the spectators stated laughing whenever his face appeared on the screen. Feeling utterly humiliated, he immediately left the cinema hall — and did not venture to see the full film for a very long time. "The film was released at 3.00 pm and flopped by 3.30 pm," was how a wag described the film! His hopes for becoming a successful film star were dashed at this very first attempt — and he candidly admits that he found this experience very difficult to get over, particularly at such a young age.

The film failed in Pune too. Searching for something to keep him occupied so as to get over this, he accepted the task of directing a play staged by girls who stayed in the hostel of Fergusson college. He said that the respect shown by the beautiful young girls was like a balm to his wounded pride, but the interaction with them never went beyond

one or the other of the girls just returning his smile when they crossed each other on roads. Around the same time, Padmakar Govaikar, a young writer-turned-actor and Anil were approached by the prestigious Marathi monthly Kirloskar to write an article about their experiences with the Marathi film industry, tentatively titled “Want to join films?” The two of them wrote a brutally frank and scathing article commenting about the very poor remuneration paid to actors, skimping on even providing properly ironed clothes though needed for the scenes, etc. Anil half-jokingly writes that coincidentally, the issue carrying their piece was one of the very few issues of the magazine that was read by some of the senior members of the Marathi film industry, and there was a move to boycott these two — but nothing came of it.

His next break came after a couple of years. It was a comedy film, to be produced in Marathi as well as in Bhojpuri. Anil was offered the villain’s role for a remuneration of Rs 300, to be paid in instalments. This assignment as always involved new and interesting experiences — shooting throughout the night, having to act in a scene with an Alsatian dog despite his being extremely scared of dogs, falling down from the roof of a car, etc! He subsequently got another role, that of a spy in a Hindi film, but he never saw the film. He had only one scene in this film — but that was with a very well-known and well-respected character actor of Hindi films, Lalita Pawar.

The Film Industry Experience

After these experiences with films, Anil went back to his first love — theatre. He formed a company and soon obtained a play written by a friend. Anil was able to cast himself in a good role. He gathered together some other actors, one of them being the beautiful Bharati Marathe who was also a good singer and whom Anil knew from their school days. The play was ready for performance within a couple of months. His earlier experience helped him in managing the finances carefully so as not to exceed the budget. The first performance of this play, titled “A Little Bitter, A Little Sweet,” staged around the end of 1965 was well-received and several subsequent performances were announced. Unfortunately, fate intervened again as the Indo Pak war of 1965 began and all performances had to be cancelled.

The next year too was a yo-yo experience. He did get an opportunity to work in a reputed company with reputed directors and co-actors. Even watching the acting of stalwarts from the wing was a very enriching experience for him. The company successfully performed in many places in Maharashtra and Goa. Financially, however, it was a very difficult period — only Rs. 40 per night, nothing when there were no performances. His remarkable ability to form friendships was the only solace — and he gratefully remarked that it was his friends who provided all support whole-heartedly and cheerfully without expecting anything in return. He stayed with some friend or the other. He ate

with various friends in various hotels. He became friendly and then fell in love with a lady who was a telephone operator. They used to meet almost every evening, and she had to pay for the food all the time, which she did not only without complaining, but cheerfully.

She would even lend him some money from time to time; at other times his friends would lend him money. When the company's last tour ended and no further performances were forthcoming, he had no option except to return to Pune and continue staying with his parents.

This was the end of 1966 and a period of serious introspection for him. He was past 25 years of age. He understood from the experience of the previous 8 years that he would never be able to lead a comfortable life on the income from acting alone. Expenses at home had also increased due to his father as well as his mother falling chronically ill, his father with TB and his mother with diabetes. Looking at his father's experience, he also realized that being a full-time freelance writer was not going to be an option either. Not only was he jobless, but whatever little money he was earning, was by ghost-writing for his father! The situation had reached such a stage that the only way he could afford to celebrate the arrival of the New Year was having a cup of tea with a friend in a neighbourhood hotel. All this led him to making a firm resolve to look for a decently paying job — not necessarily to have a life of luxury, but at least to lead a life where he was financially fully self-sufficient

The Film Industry Experience

— the passion for acting and writing would have to take a back-seat, to be taken up only during spare time if any. The search for a full-time job was now going to be his top priority.

Fate provided a helping hand at this stage. A very dynamic and enterprising friend of his, Mr. Vijay Parulkar, was working for a German TV channel and a few years ago, Anil had interviewed him and published the interview. Suddenly, after a long gap, he approached Anil with an assignment. Vijay had visited Vietnam more than twenty times, as a part of his job with a German TV channel, and was keen that his rich collection of experiences of those visits be published. The two of them lost no time in making a proposal to a leading Marathi magazine *Manoos*. They met the editor with a sample article with photographs, and a plan for many more articles. The editor was most enthusiastic and immediately agreed to accept a series of articles. Vijay was only on a visit to Pune and had very limited time to spare; he was posted in New Delhi. The editor of *Manoos*, Mr. Majgaonkar, was gracious enough to support Anil's visit to New Delhi, and Vijay invited him to stay with him, so all that was arranged. On reaching New Delhi, Anil came to know that Vijay had resigned his job with the German TV channel! They therefore had all the time at their disposal for going ahead with the articles. Vijay would narrate his experiences in the mornings, and Anil would prepare an article about it in the afternoon. They prepared eight arti-

cles in eight days, with titles like “In the land of Vietnam”, “In the waters of Vietnam”, “In the skies of Vietnam”. Anil returned to Pune after a very comfortable and productive stay in New Delhi, having enjoyed the affectionate hospitality of the Parulkar family. The articles were subsequently published — though not at the same speed that they were written. Curiously, because the author was Anil Havaladar and the experiences were of Vijay Parulkar, many readers formed the impression that Anil must have translated these articles into Marathi!

This good development led to another very important development in Anil’s life... perhaps the most important one! As mentioned earlier, Anil’s, father, Mr. Shrikrishna Havaladar, used to get some translation and writing assignments from the Russian magazine *Soviet Desh*. Now suddenly, the *Soviet Desh* office wrote to Mr. Shrikrishna Havaladar, offering him a job in their Mumbai office!

A Job with the Russians

It was quite impossible for Anil's father to relocate to Mumbai. Anil, however, jumped at the opportunity. He knew that one of the members of the editorial board of Soviet Desh, Mr. Ranganath Kulkarni and the manager, Mr. Shrinivas Korlekar were his father's friends. He therefore told his father that he would be willing to take up this job and requested him to recommend his name to the two friends. His father was not very enthusiastic; he still dreamt about Anil's becoming a very successful actor. He was sad at the prospect of Anil taking up a job and thus going away from the career of an actor. Finally, looking at Anil's keenness and genuine enthusiasm for this job, his father, a little reluctantly, did write a letter to the two friends.

Now it so turned out that Mr. Ranganath was avidly interested in Marathi stage and he and Anil were already acquainted. Mr. Shrinivas Korlekar was also aware of Anil's ability as a writer, having read many of Anil's articles published in the popular and leading Marathi magazine Manohar. They therefore had no objection whatsoever to Anil accepting the job instead of his father, and invited Anil to Mumbai for an interview, to be conducted by Mr. R. G. Akulov, the Russian Vice-Consul. Anil left Pune on 1st March 1967 and reported the next day at the office of Soviet Desh, in the Information Division of the Soviet Consulate in Mumbai.

Mr. Ranganath Kulakarni accompanied to the Chief's cabin and introduced him to Mr. Rostislav Garilovich Akulav. This tall, hefty and bearded man was very soft-spoken, and his English had a faint Russian accent. He seemed to know Anil's background very well. The conversation lasted only a few minutes — ending with Mr. Akulov simply telling Anil that he should report for duty the next morning. After coming out of that office and at the time of seeing Anil off, Mr. Kulkarni told him that he had been appointed as a Translator, Second Division, at a salary of Rs. 700 per month.

Anil's career now took off! He was already very adept at translations from English into Marathi. However, doing reporting in English was a new experience. The second in command in the office, Mr. Kuranov, taught him the necessary skills of writing to-the-point and with precision. Mr. Ranganath Kulakarni was also ever ready to guide him as he negotiated the various tasks required of him. Very soon, his hard work, sincerity and abilities were noticed by all. The Russians were very appreciative of his performance and as soon as the probationary period of three months was over, his appointment was confirmed.

Anil initially continued to stay with a friend of his but soon decided to shift to his own apartment as he was now able to afford a reasonable rent. Luckily, he could rent one apartment in Pali Hill area — famous for bungalows of Bollywood film stars! He writes that one of his dreams was

thus fulfilled.

Soon more important developments on the personal fronts followed. He attended a ceremony in Pune on behalf of his office and coincidentally met Bharati Marathe there. At one stage, he had become rather fond of this beautiful actress who was also a good singer, and came from a reputed family, but at that time, their friendship did not progress further. However, when they met each other again at this ceremony, luck favoured Anil. They met each other more often, discovered that they enjoyed each other's company and soon decided to tie the knot. Anil was appreciative of her acting and singing talents and as also her academic accomplishments; she had completed her M.A. winning the prestigious gold medal. Elders from both sides gave their blessings, and the wedding took place soon after that. Anil thus began his happy family life at his Pali Hill flat.

The yo-yo in his life continued, however. On the negative side, there were problems with his father's health as well as his own health. His articles on Vietnam, now published, made some of his colleagues in his office accuse him of expressing pro-USA views. Though this was sorted out soon, that did cause a lot of anxious moments. On the positive side, he did get offers for acting on stage — and since the plays were to be staged in Mumbai itself, he readily agreed to continue with his first love. This also provided opportunities for being introduced to stalwarts like Acharya Atre, a towering personality in Marathi literature and many more,

such as Pandit Hridaynath Mageshkar, a name far too well known. Moreover, even for small roles, the remuneration was good — about Rs. 100 per night. Despite all this, Anil slowly started getting bored of these rather insignificant roles, and the tedium of repeating the same lines night after night. He realized that acting in plays was no longer enjoyable; he had lost his passion for the theatre. He therefore decided to end his theatre career once and for all — though he was open to opportunities in the film industry if any came his way.

His daughter Jui was born on 4th November 1968. Anil feelingly writes that becoming a father turned out to be a transformative experience. He was fully immersed in his role as a father and became quite attached to his daughter. Bharati was an impressive scholar as well, and had in the meanwhile registered for a Ph.D. Her research progressed well, and soon it was time for her to write her thesis. Both Anil and Bharati felt that for writing the thesis, it would be best for her and Jui to shift to Pune and stay with her mother.

Finding it uncomfortable to stay all by himself in a big apartment in a rather remote locality, he shifted to a room at Worli Sea Face, much closer to his office. This turned out to be very advantageous. He could walk home from the office along the seashore — and he knew that such long walks always aided his imagination. A good friend and a very famous Marathi actor, Mr. Shrikant Moghe came to

stay with him. Anil's earlier mentor, Mr. Gajanan Jagirdar's house was not too far off, and he could easily meet him often. He even persuaded Jagirdar to write a couple of autobiographical books during those days.

In the meanwhile, Anil found himself doing very well at the office. One day he happened to notice some English books published by "Progress Publishers" of Russia. The translator's name was prominently printed on the inside page. This immediately ignited in him the desire to see his name as a translator in Marathi books of Progress Publishers! Always a man of action, he promptly met Mr. Akulov and broached the topic. Mr. Akulov informed him that the office of Progress Publishers in Moscow had neither a Marathi section nor a Marathi translator. Undeterred, he requested Mr. Akulov to recommend his name to the publishers. By this time, Anil's excellent performance and habit of working hard had impressed Mr. Akulov. His term in India was also drawing to a close. He agreed to recommend Anil's name to the publishers after his return to Moscow but cautioned him that things tend to move rather slowly.

It so happened that Mr. Gajanan Jagirdar wanted to produce a Marathi film just at this time. The Film Finance Corporation could be approached for a loan, but for doing that, the script had to be ready. He tried to contact a couple of well-known scriptwriters, but they could not spare the time — and the task landed in Anil's lap. Though this was going to be his first attempt as a screenplay-dialogue writer,

Anil felt very much up to it; not being under any financial or family pressure, he would be able to fully devote his attention to the task. The story of one of the earlier plays that they had produced was to be used for the film. Since most of the scenes were to be shot on a single set, costs were under control, leaving enough margin for a few outdoor shoots. As the writing progressed, Anil came up with a catchy title for the film as well — “A guest in two homes.”

Making of the Film

“Once in a while in life, one experiences unexpected and sudden success”, writes Anil, “and this film was one such happy instance”. On weekends, Mr. Jagirdar would take him along in his chauffeur-driven car to Lonavala or Khandala, well-known holiday resorts halfway between Mumbai and Pune. A bottle of rum, glasses and water were always at hand. Depending on the mood, they would even stop by the roadside at a scenic spot and have a leisurely drink. Jagirdar was an excellent recounter and had a treasure trove of experiences from his long career with film. He was also a very disciplined person when it came to work. The plan on weekends was to begin work immediately after breakfast and work throughout the day. Anil was very creative and would come up with many ideas for scenes in the film, and most of them were to Mr. Jagirdar’s liking.

Anil would then immediately write the dialogues for the scenes. He has written that his characters seemed to whisper in his ears — he had such a natural flair for writing, and he was grateful to Mr. Jagirdar for the opportunity to realize his potential in this field. In just two months, the writing was completed.

Even when in Mumbai, during weekdays, evenings were often spent in Mr. Jagirdar’s house, initially more for discussing the film, and subsequently just for interacting with

Mrs. Jagirdar and their son Ashok. Anil writes that at some point in time during these days, he started addressing Mr. Jagirdar as “Papa” — and that became a permanent term of address. After about six months, the loan for the film was sanctioned. While deciding on the casting for various roles, Papa suddenly said, “Anil, maybe you yourself should take up the role of the hero — this is a comedy film, and you have excellent experience of acting on stage; in fact, comedy roles is one of your strong points.” Anil’s joy, of course, knew no bounds.

The shooting was to be completed within a month. This was very convenient for Anil, because he could avail of one month’s annual leave at a stretch. The casting for other characters was also very satisfactory — with the well-known Shrikant Moghe in one of the major roles. Anil’s extensive circle of friends also came in handy; he could locate a friend who not only accepted a small but important role in the film but also agreed to be the assistant director and editor. The actual shooting turned out to be a delightful experience. Anil seldom needed any retakes. Having written the dialogues himself, he could deliver them very fluently and effectively as well — and this used to please the producer-director Papa Jagirdar enormously.

After 20 days of outdoor shooting, the scene shifted to Mehboob studios. The plan was to invite Shashi Kapoor for a guest appearance. However, for the actual shooting, Papa invited Sanjeev Kumar, who kindly and readily agreed. He

Making of the Film

also declined to accept any remuneration, saying that he would be happy to have one typical Maharashtrian meal in lieu of that. When the script was given to Sanjeev Kumar, Anil realized, much to his embarrassment, that Shashi Kapoor's name was inadvertently still retained there; Sanjeev Kumar, however, merely smiled at Anil and took it in his stride. Anil had candidly written that not unexpectedly; despite putting in enormous effort and summoning all his experience and skill, he could not even come close to Sanjeev Kumar's easy and delightful acting in those scenes. Sanjeev Kumar was of course most helpful and understanding and made sure that everything went off well. He even added a few sentences on his own that made the scene much better.

Anil also put to good use his knowledge of Hollywood films. It is well known that Alfred Hitchcock always appeared in one scene in each and every film directed by him. Following that, Anil also added a scene featuring the director Mr. Gajanan Jagirdar.

The film was finally ready, and a well-known distributor took responsibility for screening it across Maharashtra. It would however be about one and a half year by the time it would be premiered. In the meanwhile, Anil looked after its publicity, designing posters (one of his imaginative touches being showing a pair of keys — matching the title “A Guest in Two Homes”), writing articles in magazines describing some interesting incidents that took place during

the shooting of the film, etc.

The distributor courageously chose the famous Metro for showing the film. Marathi films were very rarely screened there — it mostly screened Hollywood films. Watching him on the poster at a theatre where one would normally see the likes of Gregory Peck and Cary Grant was a dream-come-true for Anil — whose screen name was Anil Krishna. The film was a success, and overnight Anil achieved stardom. The film ran in Metro to a full house for two weeks, despite the newspaper reviews not being overtly favourable.

Pune was the next big test, and the prominent theatre Natraj was chosen for screening it. Anil and the others arrived one day early, and Anil spent the night wandering all over the city looking at the posters. He was considerably apprehensive because the Pune crowd was known to be rather finicky. The joy was, as often was the case, overshadowed by something unconnected — his mother was very unwell and his father was under considerable tension because of that, so there was a very grim atmosphere at home despite the momentous occasion. He chose to stay in a hotel with others because of that.

The first show was a charity show, the income to be donated to a very well-known organization dedicated to women's education. The attendance was not particularly high. However, things changed for much better from the next show onwards, and the film was a roaring success in Pune too — running to full house for eight weeks. Anil

Making of the Film

used to visit Pune once in a while and used to thoroughly enjoy the celebrity status — people stopping on the road to stare at him, young girls rushing to him to get his autograph etc.

The good days had to be followed by not-so-good ones — the 1971 war forced them to discontinue the well-running film. The film, however, won two of the Government of Maharashtra awards that year — best production and best direction, both to Mr. Jagirdar. Though shows resumed after the war was over, the distributors did not show much enthusiasm as they had more than recovered their investment. As a result, the producer could not even break even. More disappointingly, not a single offer for acting in films came Anil's way, despite this striking success of the film.

Anil's domestic life in the meanwhile took a different turn. Both his and Bharati's career paths had diverged considerably. That and the possibility of Anil going to Moscow for an extended period made both feel that parting company now without any ill-will would be a very reasonable course of action. They therefore decided to opt for a divorce with mutual consent. In fact, one of Bharati's friends who was an advocate acted on behalf of both parties, and that saved half the fees.

Interlude: Waiting for the Invitation to the USSR

Papa and Anil already started working on the next venture — a film based on an English novel. The two months' stay in the pleasant ambience of a holiday resort at Karla near Pune was very productive. The very enjoyable but disciplined routine consisted of working for four hours after breakfast, enjoy a couple of pegs of gin and lime cordial with lunch to be followed by a siesta for an hour or so. Writing resumed after that and continued till evening and was followed by an hour's stroll. Pre-dinner discussion about the day's writing was accompanied by rum on the rocks, dinner at 9 and to bed by 10.30. Thus, in just two months, the screenplay and dialogues for the next film were ready. All this unfortunately turned out to be a wasted effort in a way; nothing further came out of it since nobody whom they approached showed any interest in making a film based on the screenplay.

Meanwhile, Anil's creativity found other outlets. The monthly Manohar had turned into a weekly. Anil proposed to the editor a plan of writing a column of various aspects of Mumbai — the title for the column being *Bombay My Life*. This soon became a regular and popular column in Manohar — he preferring to write under the name O'Neil. This was

Interlude: Waiting for the Invitation to the USSR

followed by a column titled *The third bell*, devoted to reviews of plays. After a few months of writing these, he came up with the remarkable plan of writing a long article on a very unusual subject — Cabaret Dancers of Bombay. The editor of the weekly not only approved of the theme but provided a good photographer to assist Anil. They criss-crossed the whole of Mumbai, watching cabarets in restaurants and night clubs, and even met quite a few of the dancers and interviewed them. An illustrated article was soon ready. The experienced editor had shrewdly advertised this article well in advance; the issue with this article sold ten times the number of copies compared to the regular issues!

During these days, Anil worked like a man possessed — writing several articles for Manohar, interviewing many interesting people for the weekly, etc. His colleagues in the Information Division of the consulate also read, enjoyed and appreciated his writing. Mr. Akulov, the Vice-Consul was in the meanwhile replaced by Mr. Trapeznikov. Anil got the opportunity to accompany him to cover an important conference in Aurangabad, and he was very pleased with Anil's report on the conference. Thereafter, Mr. Trapeznikov's relationship with Anil always remained very cordial. In fact, when a reporter of Kamsamolskaia Pravda of Moscow was visiting Mumbai, he invited both the reporter and Anil to his own apartment so that the reporter could interview Anil at length.

This resulted in a long interview of Mr. Anil Havaladar,

an upcoming actor, an accomplished writer and a successful journalist being published in Kamsamolskaia Pravada, along with Anil's photograph. Mr. Trapeznikov had in the meanwhile whispered to Anil that an invitation to him from the publisher from Moscow in on the way — but warned him not to share this with anyone. This strict confidentiality was essential because of the very likely possibility of some senior Marathi members of the communist party of India creating obstacles for Anil's selection. In fact, sections for many other Indian languages had already started work in the Moscow office. Marathi was the only section where the communist party was unable to propose the name of a consensus candidate — there were several aspirants for this coveted and lucrative post! Finally, Moscow decided to choose Anil, because of his being away from these political cabals, and because of the strong recommendation from his Bombay office testifying to his exceptional ability as a writer and a journalist, with his proven artistic talent as an additional qualification.

Anil was of course overjoyed by the thought of his being the first Marathi translator in history to be employed by the USSR — and by the opportunity to closely observe the country behind the Iron Curtain.

Anil's divorce came through around this time. Bharati was very gracious and told the judge that she did not need any alimony or monthly support because "she was very sure that the father will on his own adequately provide for

Interlude: Waiting for the Invitation to the USSR

his daughter,” — and she was of course quite right in her judgement on this issue. Anil kept on sending adequate amounts very regularly till May 1989, when his daughter Jui completed her B.A. degree.

The Very Busy Pre-departure Period

The few months in Mumbai before departing for Moscow were extremely hectic. Anil got opportunities for participating in many programs of the Bombay TV 'Doordarshan' — the most important being interviewing well-known senior theatre and film personalities — like Mama Pendse and, much to his delight, 'Papa' Gajanan Jagirdar. These were very successful and had to be televised more than once due to popular demand. Through his friend Mr. Shrikant Moghe, he was also introduced to the very well-known and respected character actor Sulochana. With his usual flair for making friends, he soon became almost a member of her family — following Shrikant, he also started calling her Didi.

In the meanwhile, Anil, Shrikant Moghe and Papa Jagirdar found the time to complete one more screenplay for a film to be titled *Raatrani* — all work being done at a pleasant resort following an enjoyable schedule as before.

Unfortunately, despite Papa and Shrikant trying hard, no further progress could be made towards making a film based on this screenplay either!

In the by now familiar interplay of grief and joy — this was the time when Anil's mother fell rather seriously ill and had to go to Mumbai and stay with her younger brother and his family — Anil's father himself being constantly

The Very Busy Pre-departure Period

unwell and Anil's younger brother, five years younger to Anil, having just taken up his first job, were unable to look after her. Sadly, Anil's mother was not at all in favour of Anil leaving India — perhaps she had a premonition that she would never see him again.

The Journalists' Association of Mumbai had organized a special felicitation for Anil. Fortunately, his father was well enough on that day, and Anil could take him along for the function. The look of contentment and happiness on Anil's father's face deeply touched Anil. To many of the queries about his stay in the USSR, Anil had no satisfactory answers. There was no formal letter in his hand, he just guessed that his stay may be for about five years. He had no idea about the salary but was sure that accommodation and related matters would be satisfactorily arranged since he was going there at the invitation of and as an employee of the Soviet Government.

Though the day of departure was approaching fast, there was no slowing down in the tempo of Anil's many activities — recording an interview of Mr. Nilu Phule, the most popular actor in the Marathi film industry in that period, accompanying Shrikant Moghe for reading of the screenplay of 'Raatrani' to actresses like Asha Parekh and Leena Chandavarkar, hoping to interest them into taking up the production of the film, accompanying Didi (Sulochana) and family to Chennai (then Madras), Pondicherry and Auroville...

Finally — to Moscow

Anil was booked for the flight leaving Mumbai on 25 July 1973. He had insisted on travelling by Air India. A farewell dinner was arranged by Didi the previous evening — and early in the morning, all of them left for the airport. The only baggage that Anil had was a handbag and two small suitcases. The moment the airport staff saw Didi (Sulochana), they opened the VIP lounge for the party. Anil's father and Anil's maternal uncle (with his wife Baby, Anil's cousin from his father's side) had also come to the airport to see him off. The flight to Moscow was via New Delhi and Tehran. Only about half a dozen passengers were left in the plane after Tehran, and they landed at the Sheremetyevo airport of Moscow after a journey of seven to eight hours.

Though it was summer in Moscow, the weather was cool. He was sure that someone from the office would be there to receive him. His knowledge of the Russian language was limited just to three words — greetings, thank you, see you again! He was, however, familiar with the Russian Cyrillic script. He had also brought along with him half a bottle of Chivas Regal whisky and a bottle of the very popular Indian rum, Old Monk. The customs officer told him that there were people to receive him. Soon, he met Mr. Vadim Novikov, the tall, handsome, Gregory Peck look-alike chief of the Foreign Division of Progress Publishers, and Margo,

Finally — to Moscow

the bespectacled Armenian with a smile on her face, who was the chief of Gujarati, Marathi and Nepali divisions and the chief editor of the Gujarati section and spoke to Anil in Hindi!

Vadim and Margo had brought a black Volga car to pick up Anil. His first impression of Moscow as seen during the drive from the airport was that of a clean and green metropolis with tall buildings and broad roads.

The drive to the apartment allotted to Anil took about one and a half hours. His was apartment no. 30, on the fifth floor of a 14-storey building; all the other tenants were Russians. The apartment was nice and compact — one bedroom, hall, kitchen and a balcony. There was also a small storeroom next to the bedroom — and Anil's remark that it was an ideal place for hiding a girl drew much laughter. They started to leave after handing over the apartment keys to Anil and a sum of 300 roubles out of his settlement allowance, and Vadim told Anil that he would pick him up the next morning at 9 AM to take him to the office. Anil requested them to have some whiskey before leaving — Margo just took a sip, but Vadim, in true Russian style, emptied the entire peg neat and in one gulp.

On the very first night, Anil faced an unexpected problem. Being used to eating out, he decided to explore the neighbourhood around 9 PM, particularly because the days were rather long in that season. Unfortunately, no restaurants or shops were open at that hour, and he had to go to

bed without food. The cafeteria used to open at 9 AM for breakfast — but he had to leave with Vadim at 9 AM, and he felt too shy to broach the topic of breakfast — and hoped that some tea or coffee may be available at the office. It so turned out that he had to go without food for more than 24-hours — suffering pangs of hunger till almost lunch time!

Notwithstanding this problem, Anil was happy with his reception in the office, an old two-storied building (though it was to subsequently occupy a new and huge eight-storied building after a few years). The head of the Indian division, Mr. Fyodor Fedorovich Anufriyev was a very cultured and gracious man who resembled Earnest Hemingway in looks. He knew English and Hindi and was the editor for the Punjabi language section. He very cordially took Anil round the office and showed him all the different sections. Anil noticed that a majority of staff members were women. Mr. Anufriyev also took him to the Accounts Section, where he was given 300 more roubles — and he has written that despite thus having 600 roubles in his pocket, he was starving! The office was also kind enough to suggest to him that he can go out as he may wish to get some basic necessities for his apartment, and arranged for Lyena, an 18-year-old translator from the Bengali section to help him with that. She knew a little bit of English. Anil took the opportunity to suggest to her that they visit a restaurant first, but she politely declined the offer, but knowing Anil's predicament, bought

Finally — to Moscow

some sausages and bread for him. Luckily, on his return to the office around 3 PM, he was happy to be told that Mr. Anufriyev had arranged a lunch invitation for him.

It had so happened that when a group of Nehru Award winners visited Mumbai a few years ago, Anil got the opportunity to meet Madam Natalia Guseva. A play written by her based on Ramayana for Moscow's children's theatre was very famous. Praised even by Pandit Nehru himself, the play continued to be staged in Moscow for more than twenty years. Anil had continued to correspond with her subsequently and happened to mention this during his discussion with Mr. Anufriyev in the morning. While Anil was out shopping, Mr. Anufriyev had telephoned Madam Guseva, and she had graciously invited both of them for lunch to her place. Her husband Mr. Patabenko was an acclaimed painter and was the chief of the division of culture at the Soviet embassy in New Delhi. Madam Guseva was a scientist — an anthropologist. Anil was very impressed by this wonderful erudite couple, who had done so much to introduce many aspects of Indian Culture to the people of the Soviet Union.

Settling Down in the Office — And Spreading His Wings Beyond It

The Marathi section had just started functioning and Mr. Anufriyev had warned Anil that he should be prepared for some teething troubles that may crop up. However, Anil settled into a comfortable routine very quickly. He came to know that his initial contract was for a period of three years. Technically, he was still an employee of Novosti and was working with Progress Publishers on lien. Mr. Trapeznikov had wisely made this arrangement to ensure that in case Anil had to return to India, he should continue to have his job in the Soviet Desh office in Mumbai.

The office was huge — with more than 3000 employees. It was run very efficiently and systematically. Two hundred translators handled translations of 40 international languages, thirty-five of them looking after Indian languages. Hindi, Bengali and Tamil sections were running for a long time and were well-staffed. Anil was proud to be the very first and only translator employed for Marathi. None of the existing Russian staff members knew Marathi, so a pensioner by the name of Mr. Gladishev was inducted as the editor for Marathi. He had worked earlier in Progress Publishers as an editor for Hindi. He was also a correspondent for ‘Taas’ and functioned from Mumbai in 1944 for some

Settling Down in the Office

time. He did know a little bit of Marathi. Anil soon realized that though Mr. Gladishev's Marathi vocabulary was rather limited, his grasp of Marathi grammar was excellent.

Ms. Margo was the notional head of the Marathi section. Her tasks consisted of allotting books to translators, getting the translations done, keeping track of progress and accounts etc. The arrangements to print Marathi books were excellent — the skill of the typesetters in composing pages in Devanagari despite the script being unfamiliar to them was commendable; their reputation for high quality, almost error-free printing was well-deserved. Several Marathi books had already been printed and had been distributed through the *Lokvangmay Griha* in Mumbai. Maxim Gorky's novel *Mother*, translated into Marathi by Mr. Prabhakar Urdhvaresha, had run into many editions.

Anil gradually settled into his routine. Commuting was by metro and luckily, the metro stations were close to his home as well as to the office, with only a few stations in between. Food continued to be a big problem for many days. There was no alternative to eating in restaurants. The service was very slow, half an hour to take the order, half an hour or more for the food to be served. It was tough to just sit idle for so long — so ordering cognac was the only way out; the bill for drinks often exceeded that for food — and the food was bland and tasteless. Travelling by buses was easy and inexpensive though, and after exploring many regions in the city, Anil soon discovered some restaurants that

served better food. Anil's impressions of Moscow (*Muskva* in Russian) was very favourable. The population then was about eight million. Public transport consisted of taxis, buses, trolley buses, trams and underground metro. The 105 metro stations, though underground, looked like marble palaces. Everything everywhere was spotlessly clean — no smoking, no spitting, no shouting. Blue cars moved fast and noiselessly on good roads. One thing that struck him was the high participation of women in the workforce — amongst drivers, operating the signals, the automated gates of metros; they were everywhere.

On his third day in the office, Margo handed over four children's books to him for translation from English into Marathi. This was the normal way of functioning for most Indian translators — they did not know Russian but had good command over their mother tongue. Subsequently, the office started offering these jobs to the Indian students in Moscow, who were very proficient in Russian. This experiment was not very successful, because these students did not have good command over their mother tongue — having come to the USSR for higher studies just after completing their schooling almost always in English Medium Schools! Anil also makes it a point to emphasize that having a good knowledge of two languages is not at all adequate for carrying out translations; it is essential to grasp 'the soul of the original work!' Progress Publishers was therefore always on the lookout for experienced translators.

Settling Down in the Office

One of the first books given to Anil was titled *Masha and Medved*; it was the story of a girl named Maria and a bear, the diminutive form of Maria being Masha. Now though this was a proper noun, retaining it in the Marathi title would have been completely absurd, Masha being a Marathi word for houseflies! He therefore translated the title as *The Stupid Bear* (अडाणी अस्वल — consistent with the content of the book. He has given many more examples of Russian names that sound hilarious when retained as such in Marathi.

Anil was used to working very hard and very fast. He finished three of the books in just ten days. This turned out to be too quick for comfort for the colleagues in his section, because there was not enough work to keep him fully engaged if he worked at this speed! This, however, left Anil with a lot of free time, and he made good use of it by travelling to many parts of the city and establishing many contacts.

He also used to buy many things for the apartment during this time. That depleted his money much faster than he had imagined. The Indian colleagues in the office were still a little too formal — none had invited him home as yet. He felt too embarrassed to borrow money from anyone — though he gratefully adds that the women and girls in his office did help out from time to time in some way or the other, occasionally even inviting him to join for some outings in the city to show him some tourist attractions of

Moscow.

During one of his wanderings, he found himself in front of the Lenin Memorial. Suddenly, two young men approached him. They had noticed his Swiss Automatic wrist-watch and wanted to know if he was willing to sell it to them. He was in desperate need of money anyway, so he immediately asked them as to what price they were willing to pay. The figure quoted by them did seem very favourable — but his instincts of haggling, honed in the streets of Bombay took over. After some negotiations, they did agree for a higher amount and the deal was set to be completed the next evening, same place, same time. Anil went there as scheduled, after having ascertained in the meanwhile that the money obtained by selling the watch was adequate for buying a new Russian watch and for his food for the remaining ten days of the month. The two young men were waiting for the money. The exchange took place immediately; the two young men were musicians and were happy with the purchase — and he was happy with the price. A small crowd seem to collect to observe all this, so the two immediately disappeared. Anil was a little apprehensive at the 25 rouble currency notes given by them as he had never seen such notes — but was relieved that they were accepted when he went to buy a new watch, and he celebrated the sale by his going to one of his favourite restaurants.

Travelling 10-15 kilometres for every meal, long waits, tasteless food — all this began to tell on Anil's health; in

Settling Down in the Office

the span of just 15-20 days, he suffered a weight loss of 5-6 kilograms. One day Mr. Trapeznikov, his boss in the Mumbai office, unexpectedly dropped in. He was in Moscow for his annual vacation. He took Anil home for dinner. His wife expressed concern at Anil's severe weight-loss. Mr. Trapeznikov just winked saying "Anil must be having a really great and busy time with all those young girls in the office!" Anil mournfully writes that his condition was so pathetic in those days that the thought of girls and women had not entered his mind even once — a most drastic change compared to his days in Mumbai.

Anil soon expanded his sphere of work. He contacted the Moscow office of Novosti (the parent organization of the Marathi magazine Soviet Desh) and worked out an arrangement for sending an article titled *From the Banks of River Moscow* to the weekly *Manohar*. This was a complex operation. He had to submit the Marathi article and its English translation to Mr. Akulov in his office. These would then go, via Novosti, to the office of Soviet Desh in Mumbai, and they in turn would send the Marathi article to the office of the weekly *Manohar*. There was one advantage of this arrangement though — he would get paid in Roubles for this article in Moscow, and *Manohar* office would send the remuneration to Anil's father in Pune — two payments for one article.

In fact, Anil was enterprising enough to arrange for yet another outlet for his creativity. Talks based on these arti-

cles would be broadcast from Radio Moscow as well. In fact, Radio Moscow even arranged to broadcast translations of all his talks into many other Indian languages from those channels. This also provided an opportunity for Anil to be introduced to Irina Lebedeva, the Marathi announcer of Radio Moscow, and to Mrs. Shaila Dange, the daughter of Mr. Shripad Amrut Dange, one of the most prominent leaders of the communist party of India. The close friendship between Anil, Shaila and her husband Mr. Raza Ali was one of the most pleasant experiences of Anil's 16 year stay in Moscow.

Mr. Akulov had in the meanwhile introduced Anil to two others. Mr. Igor Alexandrov, the editor of Youth review, was of the same age as Anil, and they soon became good friends. They did a lot of work together for Youth Review, Anil writing many articles in English for the magazine. Because of Igor, Anil could attend film festivals in Moscow and in Tashkent — and the Tashkent festival led to invitations to Anil for attending the film festivals at Leipzig and Varna. Igor also introduced Anil to Marina Blagonravova, the other editor of Youth Review. They too did a lot of work together for Youth Review. Igor-Marina-Anil formed a close-knit group of friends — Marina and Igor were fluent in English and that of course helped a great deal.

The other introduction by Mr. Akulov was to Mr. Baris Vlasov, who was with the television division of Novosti. The two of them made many telefilms on various topics,

Settling Down in the Office

with Moscow city as the background. Anil thus was fully immersed in writing, radio-talks and making of telefilms. His main job, that of doing translations for Progress Publishers, was going on simultaneously and very well. In addition to all this, Anil also started learning spoken Russian. His office even arranged a teacher for him — one-hour sessions twice a week. All went well till he reached a stage where he had to learn grammar.

This was not to his liking, and discontinuing the lessons, he continued the subsequent study on his own. His tenacity, and the gift of good memory that he had, helped him to soon become quite proficient in Russian. He also adds that a lot of credit for his progress goes to his Russian colleagues. They always encouraged him and praised his progress. Even when he made a mistake in pronunciation, they never made him self-conscious by pointing it out — they merely repeated the correct pronunciation during subsequent conversations. Just paying attention to them was very helpful to him for picking up Russian quite well.

Thus, within just a few months, Anil comfortably settled into a productive and enjoyable routine in Moscow — except of course for the problem of food.

Tamara

One day when he went to his office, Margo laughingly told him that a beautiful young lady was eager to meet him. This turned out to be Tamara Grigorevana Frolova, the Chief of the section that supplied furniture to the employees staying in the quarters allotted by the office. She wanted to know if Anil needed any additional furniture and offered to visit Anil's apartment the next day to get a better idea of his requirement. It did look as if she had taken a fancy to Anil. Margo was hugely enjoying the situation — and made many suggestive comments (in Hindi, so that only Anil could understand the meaning) encouraging Anil to reciprocate. Anil adds that Margo was Anil's genuine well-wisher. Moreover, the Russians generally had a very healthy attitude towards man-woman relationships. They were of the opinion that nobody should be all alone; a man should have a woman as a companion, and a woman should have a man as a companion; live-in relationships were not in the least uncommon.

Tamara had approached Anil only after finding out all about him. She was an engineer-economist and had a job in the ministry earlier. However, she got bored of the job and had joined Progress Publishers as in-charge of furniture supply! She was about thirty-five years of age, a divorcee with a ten-year-old daughter. The daughter stayed with

Tamara

Tamara's mother, and Tamara had an independent flat in Moscow. Tamara was indeed very good looking — and the then thirty-two-year-old Anil has written that his inner voice whispered to him then and there: "this golden-haired beauty is indeed the life-companion of whom you had been dreaming all these years!"

He therefore immediately extended a dinner invitation to her for the same evening. She accepted, and they decided to meet near the telephone booths in front of a metro station at 6 PM. Anil reached the place at a quarter to six itself. He waited and waited, and there was no sign of her. After waiting for more than an hour, he came to the conclusion that she must have decided against joining him — and accepted the situation philosophically and left the place. However, when he came to the other side of the metro station — to his chagrin, he saw another set of telephone booths there! He had forgotten that many metro stations had two entrances!

Next day he rang up Tamara in her office first thing in the morning and apologized for the confusion. She was very understanding, and when he invited her once again to his place, she graciously accepted and agreed to come in the evening. Anil was very relieved when she actually turned up in the evening at his place. He was very pleasantly surprised when she showed him what she had brought with her — a tin of frozen chicken, a packet of butter and a frying pan in a bag in one hand and a broom and a floor-wiper brush in the other. She told him that they could have a dinner of

fried chicken at home, and as Anil watched with joy and appreciation, busied herself with cleaning the house and cooking. They had an excellent dinner, accompanied by cognac of course, and pleasant conversation undistracted by radio or TV (he had neither); his very first meal at his own house in Russia!

Both Tamara and Anil took to each other from the very beginning. Their acquaintance soon blossomed into a very joyous, loving and caring relationship. Tamara was vivacious, fun-loving, enthusiastic and very social — and turned out to be an ideal companion for Anil. They regularly went out for shopping, parties, sightseeing, small and intimate picnics, outings with friends like Igor and his girlfriends, etc. The evenings that earlier used to stretch interminably for hours when Anil was alone now in Tamara's company would seem to last only for a few minutes! Tamara also introduced Anil to her daughter and her mother. A couple of times when Anil was unwell, it was only due to her constant, affectionate and expert ministrations that he could recover speedily; being looked after so nicely was a very pleasant experience for Anil during these times.

The name 'Tamara' comes from the name of the tall, straight Red Sandalwood Tree. It was also the name of a famous queen of Georgia, located in the Caucasus mountains. Anil writes that Tamara indeed had a regal demeanour, and was very beautiful, noble, dignified and charming like someone from a Royal family. She, like most Russians, was very

Tamara

fond of poetry.

Unfortunately, Anil had no interest in poetry — and he had already made it clear that he would not be able to take up the translation of any books of poems. Tamara was an expert and enthusiastic dancer as well; ball dance and gypsy dance were her favourites. Anil could pick up the gypsy dance to some extent with her coaching — but waltz turned out to be far too difficult to learn for him.

The domestic life with Tamara was bliss. Under her loving care, Anil's health improved rapidly and he made up for the earlier weight loss. Igor and his girlfriends (a man who had gone through two marriages and two divorces, he arrived with a different girlfriend every time) were regular week-end visitors. Once Anil asked Igor as to whether such a live-in relationship was legally permitted, as he did not wish to fall foul of any Russian law, and that whether it was better for him to marry Tamara. Igor just laughed and told him that such live-ins were sanctioned by society and members of the couples were referred to as civil-husband and civil-wife. He reassured Anil that as long as he and Tamara were happy staying together without getting married, there would be no problem for them to continue doing so indefinitely.

October soon approached — and so did the anniversary of the 1917 revolution. Anil thought of writing a couple of articles — one for *Youth Review* and one for *Manohar*, and that too by visiting Leningrad where it all began. Igor

also liked the idea and discussed with his superiors, and with their approval, Novosti sanctioned the expenses for a four-day visit to Leningrad for Igor and Anil. They decided to take along Tamara and Irena (Igor's current girlfriend) at their own expenses. All arrangements like train and hotel bookings were done by Igor.

No travel within the USSR could be undertaken by a foreigner without a formal approval from the authorities; in fact, without a documentary proof of such approval, no railway or airlines tickets were issued to foreigners. Obtaining the approval and related documents was a long and complex process. Luckily for Anil, his office had a section that looked after such matters and that was very helpful. Staying with friends in Leningrad was not an option — it was compulsory for foreigners to stay in hotels, and that too after registering themselves with the local police. Initially Anil found all this extremely irritating — but then as always, got used to these facts of life in the Soviet Union.

Thanks to the help from Igor and Vadim, the travel arrangements were excellent. A coupe was booked for Anil and Tamara in the prestigious train named Red Arrow; it was difficult even for Soviet citizens to get tickets for this train. Igor and his girlfriend were to follow by the next train. Thus, just within four months of his arrival in Moscow, Anil was off to visit Leningrad, a city 600 miles north of Moscow — his very first trip out of Moscow!

Leningrad

They reached Leningrad after a journey of just 6-7 hours. They were booked in Hotel Astoria — a suite each for Anil and Igor and rooms for the two women. Anil soon discovered, to his horror, that the charges for him, a foreigner, were 35 roubles, whereas Igor was charged 6 roubles, and the women, only 4 roubles! Anil remarks on the rate of inflation in passing — in the 1990s, the rent for a room itself had shot up to \$100 — and foreigners were not even permitted to pay in roubles.

The hotel Astoria had a rich history. The famous poet Yesenin had committed suicide in this hotel long ago. As a tribute to his memory, some song or the other of his was played every day in the hotel. It seems that Hitler had also planned a grand party to be held in this hotel once he conquered Leningrad! That, however, never happened. The citizens of Leningrad successfully defended the 900-day siege — notwithstanding terrible losses of life and destruction of the city.

The original name of the city was Saint Petersburg, that was changed to Petrograd, and then renamed Leningrad after the revolution — and Anil remarks that the Russians share with Indians the penchant for renaming cities. He was amazed at the very successful restoration of the heritage building like palaces and even churches (the Revolution did

not vandalize any religious places!). When Anil asked the guide “You have overthrown the Czars, why do you now retain these opulent palaces?” and she replied that their quarrel was not with History, and they wanted the new and future generations to know about the glories of the Russian Empire. An interesting place to visit was the St. Isaac Cathedral; it survived absolutely intact despite the heavy bombings and extensive cannon-fire that the city faced during the war years.

Anil had a very busy three days in Leningrad and they were very productive. He met a professor of Marathi in Leningrad University, Madam Katherina (he had read about her in a Marathi article by Acharya Atre, one of the stalwarts of Marathi literature, he had used the name ‘Katyayani’ for her). Their conversation was in English; to Anil’s astonishment, she could not speak Marathi at all. He was just unable to understand how one can teach and learn a language without speaking or hearing it. In fact, many of Prof. Madam Katherina’s students subsequently joined Progress Publishers’ Marathi section — and none of them could speak Marathi either! Their command over Marathi grammar was however most impressive.

Another Marathi-knowing person whom he met was Madam Neena Krasnodembskaya. A few years later, she translated a very famous Marathi novel *Mumbai Dinank* by Arun Sadhu into Russian. This was probably the first systematic translation of a Marathi book into Russian. Ti-

Leningrad

tled *Dyen Bambeya*, it was published by Progress Publishers, and the print run was 30,000 copies. The Institute for Ancient Languages, functioning under the Soviet Academy of Sciences, had also brought our Russian translations of representative short stories of well-known Marathi authors like Arvind Gokhale and Vyankatesh Madgulkar. A few of these translations were rather ordinary — but the translations by Madam Krasnodembskaya were excellent.

The Soviets had an interesting policy towards translations. They employed only native speakers for translations to that language; thus, translation into Marathi was entrusted only to the native speakers of Marathi. Even if a Russian knew Marathi well, only his or her Marathi to Russian translations were accepted, not Russian to Marathi! Very few Russians could be said to know Marathi very well. Mr. Vladimir Lamshukov was extremely knowledgeable about the history of Marathi literature — he was a real scholar, but was not very well known, primarily because of his unwillingness to actively seek publicity. On the other hand, the considerably less talented Ira Levedeva and Ira Glushkova had become famous in Mumbai and Pune. At that time, the editor of Marathi at Progress Publishers, Tatiana Pechnikova, had excellent knowledge of English and Marathi. She was the daughter of Gennadi Pechnikov, a famous actor who played the role of Rama in the play *Ramayana*, very popular with children. Tatiana worked really hard to acquire exceptional proficiency over Marathi. In

addition to a lot of sightseeing, Anil managed to see a wonderful ballet as well.

Evenings were spent in wining and dining in the good restaurant of the hotel with friends. Anil, however, makes it a point to mention that all this — getting accommodation in good hotels, being able to eat in good restaurants, getting tickets for the ballet — was possible and easy ONLY because theirs was a visit sponsored by their organization, and therefore, by the government. Nothing was possible when one arrived on a personal visit — there were obstacles at every step!

On the morning of the day of returning to Moscow (Tamara and Igor's girlfriend having left the previous evening), a very worried Igor told Anil that they had overshot their expenses and did not have adequate money for settling the bill of the hotel! This was because of the unexpectedly large amount that Anil had to be pay because of his 'foreigner' status — something that their office had not taken into account while sanctioning the money. Though this could be (and was) sorted out after returning to Moscow, the problem at hand had to be dealt with. Many frantic calls (possible only because local calls were free in the Soviet Union) to various friends and acquaintances were made. At the end of almost an hour of such efforts, he managed to reach Larissa, who was present at one of the dance and dinner parties. Luckily, she had great admiration and affection for India and was happy at the thought of Anil visiting her

Leningrad

home. She and her father welcomed him very cordially and hosted a nice lunch with good wine for Anil and Igor. As they returned to the hotel, Igor informed Anil that Larisaa had unobtrusively slipped an envelope to him, containing enough money to tide over the difficulty. After returning to Moscow, as soon as the money was reimbursed, Igor of course returned the amount by sending a money order to Larissa.

Anil had one more opportunity to visit Leningrad when their office arranged a tour of Leningrad for all their translators and their families in 1982. This time the accommodation was in an inexpensive hotel near the Leningrad Railway station. Apart from sightseeing, there was also a get-together arranged by the Indo-Soviet Cultural Association; one of its highlights was a speech by a Russian gentleman delivered in pure Sanskrit.

The beautiful sky, the intellectual people, the great historical tradition... and many other admirable qualities of Leningrad made Anil remark that one is bound to fall in love with this wonderful city on the banks of the river Neva.

Winter

The whole world is in awe of the Russian winter that had vanquished the likes of Napoleon and Hitler. That much dreaded winter was set to approach soon. The preceding days, the last days of autumn, were rather beautiful; the great poet Alexander Pushkin has described them as “Golden Autumn”, because of the golden colour of the foliage. The green leaves of trees first turn reddish, giving the impression that the trees are on fire; then they turn golden just before the onset of winter — that begins with stinging winds and cold rains! Anil remarks that the romantic scenes of strolling in the rains under a single shared umbrella with one’s beloved, made famous by Bollywood, were absolutely out of question there! Despite all the help and precautions from the experienced Tamara, Anil found the winter days very trying. Good gloves and winter shoes were essential — but very difficult to obtain during winter because of the perpetual shortages common in the Soviet Union in those days. One was expected to prepare for winter by buying such stuff in summer itself — and that could not obviously happen in the very first year as Anil had landed in Moscow after summer and was completely ignorant of all this!

The acquaintances with fellow translators did develop slowly but did not lead to friendship. They were quite senior to Anil, having been in Moscow since 1957. He also came

into contact with the Indian announcers of Radio Moscow. The translators and announcers had in fact formed an India Association as well — but that too suffered from the usual internal politics and jockeying for the positions of office bearers; only the office bearers were invited for some of the functions by the Indian Embassy. It was, however, the lack of any stimulating conversations or exchanges of ideas that made Anil keep himself away from these groups.

To add to all these depressing circumstances, he was allotted the book “What Should be Done” by Lenin. Though a great thinker, Lenin was not exactly a great writer — and Anil found it quite a chore to wade through that. He was keen on getting the excellent literary works of Russian authors for translation — not political writings. However, political propaganda was one of the main objectives of the publishing house. Anil was of course well aware of the fact that he needed to pay the price of carrying out all these boring tasks very diligently for getting what he wanted; that did not make the task any easier, however.

His editor Mr. Gladishev was from the old school and hence very sincere; he subjected Anil’s translation to a very thorough scrutiny. Since his knowledge of Marathi was rather poor, Anil had to explain the meanings of many of the words to Mr. Gladishev. The translated book would be taken up for printing only after the editor was fully satisfied with the quality and accuracy of translation. Anil notes that the editors who succeeded Mr. Gladishev were never

as thorough and their examination of his translations was rather cursory. Most of the translation work was carried out from home. The snow made it very difficult to go out for walks. Being cooped up in the house was not a pleasant experience either. Tamara even bought skis to persuade Anil to try skiing — but his very first attempt ended in disaster and he gave up the idea. Tamara, however, ensured that he got abundant, tasty and healthy food at home.

One does not see much of Xmas celebrations in Moscow, but the arrival of the New Year is celebrated on a grand scale — in offices as well as at homes. People make bookings in famous restaurants several months in advance for partying there on the New Year Day. There was much wining, dining and dancing everywhere. Tamara had invited her daughter for the New Year party. Igor and his yet another new girlfriend were also there. Anil had a glimpse of the power of Soviet propaganda when he heard Tamara's teenage daughter angrily denouncing Solzhenitsyn as a traitor.

The new year was ushered in by watching the telecast of the tolling of the Kremlin clock striking 12 midnight. Tamara came up with the brilliant idea of all of them going out to a grove of poplar trees nearby and drinking champagne there. This was most enthusiastically approved by all. They all trooped out, well protected against the cold by warm clothes, sang as they formed a ring around a fir tree there, and emptied glass after glass of champagne. Igor even lit some sparklers to add to the celebratory atmosphere.

Winter

Despite the temperature being -15 degrees Celsius, a most enjoyable time was had by all!

A few days into the new year, Anil received a letter from his father. Letters sent by him took 10 days to reach India — but the letters from India took two months to reach him. This situation remained unchanged for the next 16 years of his stay and nobody could explain the reasons for this peculiarity. Some tried to attribute it to censoring of the letters by the Soviet government — but Anil doubted the veracity of this. His father had written to him that no money sent by Anil had reached him till then. Anil found this most puzzling, since he had been faithfully sending eighty roubles (approximately Rs. 900 those days) every month; and the understanding was that his father should give Rs. 200 for Anil's daughter Jui and keep the rest for himself. He therefore had been under the impression that everything was going on very satisfactorily on this front. He informed Margo, his boss, who took him to the accounts section. Those 80 roubles (and tax) were being regularly deducted from the salary.

On going through the files, it was discovered that no money was sent to India for the previous four months. The reason was that the lady entrusted with this task (a pensioner employed on contract) had been unwell — and the whole matter was deliberately kept under wraps. Anil just could not control his anger; he raised his voice and blasted the people in the accounts. They of course admitted their

mistake — but that was hardly a solution. Moreover, there was one more serious obstacle in sending all the money — the Soviet government did not permit sending money in excess of twice the sanctioned monthly quota, and the publishing house, working under the authority of the Soviet Press Committee, had to abide by that rule. There was thus no way whatsoever to remedy the situation quickly. The only thing the office offered to do was to send 160 roubles to India and return the remaining 160 roubles to Anil.

This hardly solved the problem; Anil was infuriated at having to suffer for no fault of his. The gigantic Soviet government cheating him through a small cog in its wheel was something he found intolerable and he felt like resigning and returning to India immediately. That, however, would have been financially disastrous for him, and he had no option other than to accept the situation. He blamed himself for not having read the contract carefully before signing it. He was used to the systematic and proper working of Novosti; in stark contrast, Progress Publishers' functioning was nothing to write home about — and this is how Anil suffered the first of many blows from the Soviet bureaucracy.

The usual experience of good and bad days chasing each other continued — and now it was the turn of good days. Anil had a telephone in his apartment, and one day he received a call from the Novosti office. A good amount was due from them to Anil, for his articles, for telefilms, etc,

Winter

and they wanted to know how he would collect it. Igor helped him with the modalities. The amount was more than a thousand roubles. Igor smilingly advised him that he should keep some amount just with himself, hidden from Tamara. Anil learnt a new Russian word in this context: *Zanachaka* — meaning money secreted away keeping the wife in the dark (from the word Zina, meaning wife). Anil, however, found this idea abhorrent; he did not wish to be dishonest in his dealings with Tamara. Her birthday was on 2nd February and Anil gifted her a beautiful winter coat made from artificial fur, made in Czechoslovakia — remarking that there is no better joy than to give a beautiful gift to one's beloved!

Beginning of Summer — and the Tashkent Film Festival

Russian winters are at their most severe in January-February with temperatures going down to –30 degrees Celsius during daytime; nights are even colder. Occasional blizzards are very frightening — one finds even the sound of the strong winds very terrifying. Nights are long, evenings are gloomy — it becomes dark at 4 PM itself, and the sunrise is well after 9 AM. One finds tall heaps of snow on the road. Moscow, however, was very well managed in winter, much better than what one found in most cities in the West. The snow on the roads was cleared very quickly and efficiently. Public transport was well heated, and so were the homes. Providing inexpensive heating to the citizens was one of the high points of the Soviet Union.

By this time, Anil's reputation as a very competent and successful author was well established in the Moscow office of Novosti. They wanted Anil to write an article each for Youth Review and for Manohar on the prestigious Mosfilm Studio — a task that made Anil very happy since he had as much respect for Mosfilm Studio as he had for the iconic Prabhat Studio in Pune. Novosti made arrangements for Anil to visit Mosfilm on the 8th of March. They had even assigned an understudy, a young journalist named Mikhail,

Beginning of Summer — and the Tashkent Film Festival

who was to observe the way Anil interviewed people, wrote his articles, etc. Mikhail owned a car, and the journey of 35-kilometres was completed in just 40-minutes. Thanks to the prior arrangements made by Novosti, they could easily move around the studio that was spread over a large area and could even watch the shooting of a film — a joint Soviet-Polish production. Anil could also meet the Russian actress Ludmilla Kasatkina who was well-known in India for her role in the film *Taming of the Tigers*; it seems that Pandit Nehru himself had appreciated her for her fearlessness in acting in her scenes with tigers. Anil requested for her phone number which she shared readily. When Anil tried to reciprocate the courtesy, she curtly said that she never rang up men on their own.

After gathering all the information, Anil returned home — hungry and looking forward to a good lunch. To his shock, he found a furious Tamara sitting at the empty dining table, next to her daughter Tanya. There was nothing in the kitchen either. On enquiring, Tamara replied that she had not prepared any food. “Why?” “Because you did not give me any gift today on 8th of March”. It seems that in Russia, 8th of March is celebrated as a very special day for women, and everyone, especially husbands and boyfriends, were expected to shower the wives and girlfriends with gifts. Anil was unaware of this. Moreover, he did not think that this was as serious a lapse as Tamara seemed to imply; he had given her very expensive gifts on her birthday just

a few days earlier. He was extremely angry and hurt. He realized that he had no right to shout at Tamara. He had always treated her with respect, and more than fairly; all the household expenses were borne by him alone. He also paid the rent for her apartment and her telephone. She, in turn, looked after him and the house very competently and with affection. To him, this did seem like living together happily, and that was all he wanted from this relationship. He was at a complete loss to understand this sudden hostility on her part. Fortunately, Tanya brokered peace on that occasion, and normalcy was restored. Anil goes on to add that he later realized that this was just Tamara's habit, and he soon learned to make allowances for that; the scar of this occasion remained with him forever. He also mentions that this was the one and only time when he received some help from Tanya.

By the end of February, Anil had completed the translation of Lenin's work. As if as a reward, he started getting some nice books for translation. Anil used to work very hard and accepted a large number of books. His Russian colleagues, however, never went beyond what was entrusted to them. One of the reasons, of course, was that Anil's remuneration depended on the number of translations carried out by him; they, on the other hand, had a fixed monthly salary independent of the actual work done. So, there was no incentive at all for them to take up extra work. The other unusual feature of the Soviet system was that the concept

Beginning of Summer — and the Tashkent Film Festival

of annual increment did not exist at all. The salary was fixed once and for all and remained the same regardless of how long an employee continued to work. It was therefore unsurprising that they were bored, lost all interest in the work, and were lethargic.

Anil's next assignment was a set of three novellas by the famous Kirgiz author, Chingiz Aitmatov. Many of the short stories of this popular author, winner of the Lenin Prize, have been turned into movies. Produced by studios in Kirgizia, these films are excellent and have been well appreciated in many international film festivals. Anil had put his heart and soul into these translations, and they came out very well. The first edition of the Marathi book titled "Three Novellas," was sold out in just three months in India. Anil was soon to get the opportunity to meet the author Chingiz Aitmatov in person. An international film festival of African and Asian films was going to be held in the month of May at Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan. Thanks to Igor's initiative, Anil was also entrusted with the task of covering the festival for Novosti — an assignment as a journalist.

Tashkent is exactly halfway between Moscow and India — just a 3 ½-hour journey. Air travel within USSR, by Inn-travels, was inexpensive; cost of the air ticket to Tashkent was just 49 roubles. Igor was not coming to Tashkent but came with Anil to the airport just to see him off and also to help him through the complex modalities at the airport.

There were separate arrangements for foreigners; separate queues, separate checking, separate sitting arrangements in the aircraft and even separate airhostesses. Anil found this arrangement very convenient for a change because Soviet citizens always travelled with a huge amount of luggage and the interior of the plane became extremely cramped and smelly to boot. When Anil left Moscow, it was snowing lightly and the temperature was -4 degrees Celsius. Tashkent, where he landed just after three and a half hours, was hot, the temperature being 40 degrees Celsius. He was happy to hear the phrase "Salam Alekum" after a very long time. In fact, at first sight, during the drive from the airport to Hotel Tashkent, the city looked like a typical Muslim locality in a typical North Indian town. The artists and technicians who were deputed by the Tashkent studio to look after the Indian delegates were very cordial and friendly.

Anil soon got the opportunity to be introduced to the young, upcoming and talented Uzbeki film director Ali Hamrayev (who went on to win the Golden Peacock in one of the film festivals held in India). By this time, Anil could comfortably converse in Russian and he and Ali quickly became good friends — yet another instance of Anil's remarkable ability of forming friendships! Ali in turn introduced Anil to the young Uzbeki star actress Tamara Shakirova. She too was very friendly and had no airs whatsoever of stardom in her attitude. She was moving around like a college student — maybe she was one, she was not even

Beginning of Summer — and the Tashkent Film Festival

20 years of age. The Chief of the Uzbeki Organizing committee had given strict instructions to Anil to stick with Tamara Shakirova all the time -- an instruction he found most enjoyable to comply with.

On the very first day at dinner time, Anil met the delegation of the Indian film industry consisting of about 30-35 people. He already knew Mr. Vasantrao Sathe, a scriptwriter for Raj Kapoor and a colleague of the legendary Khwaja Ahmad Abbas. Mr. Sathe quickly introduced him to many other members -- stalwarts of Bollywood. Of them, Basu Chatterjee, Basu Bhattacharya and Gulzar subsequently became Anil's good friends. Mr. Girish Karnad arrived the next day, but he was suffering from severe toothache. By this time, Anil had become the unofficial interpreter for the Indian delegation and informed the members of the organizing committee of this problem. They immediately arranged for Girish to be taken to a dentist, who freed Girish of the pain by extracting the tooth. This sealed the friendship between Girish Karnad and Anil. The screening of the films in the festival was during the day, and the evenings were kept free for the interested delegates to watch the Uzbeki plays that were being staged in the city. The troika of the Bengali film director Purnendu Patra, Girish and Anil made full use of this opportunity. A young lady named Lydia was assigned to this group; she could not speak English at all and Anil once again became an interpreter for Purnendu and Girish.

In all such film festivals, the Press Bar becomes an important watering hole at night. Many of the delegates drank there, well into the night. This is also a place to meet many people. Anil happened to meet Mr. Trish, the director of the film festival that was going to be held in Leipzig, East Germany, and very soon, he extended an invitation to Anil for the festival that was to take place in November that year.

In the rare moments of solitude, Anil used to feel a little sad about his having drifted away from the world of films. Though his desire to attend international film festivals was indeed satisfied, he was unhappy that he was attending it only as a journalist — not at all as someone active in the film industry. It evoked mixed feelings in him when he realized that some of the delegates were under the impression that he was a film director.

It was time to return to Moscow; the ten days at Tashkent seemed to have just zipped by! The flight in the afternoon was preceded by a very intimate morning with Lydia — who dropped into his room that morning, unexpectedly and of course to his great delight. This did cause a little trouble at home when the observant Tamara noticing some suspicious-looking marks on his neck and enquired as to what they were. He quickly came up with the explanation that they were because the sharp edge of the strap of the shoulder-bag must have rubbed against his neck on a couple of occasions.

A Very Eventful Period

Tamara left it at that, but it was clear that she was unconvinced. Her suspicions were soon confirmed when Anil got a warm letter from Lydia to greet him on his birthday. Anil stuck to his earlier stand of not having committed any impropriety -- cursing himself mentally for having made the mistake of sharing his home address with Lydia.

Notwithstanding all this, Tamara celebrated Anil's birthday with a grand party, inviting Anil's new Marathi acquaintances, Anil's friends from the office, her own friends, Igor and his yet another companion. It was a very happy and enjoyable birthday for Anil.

Mr. Gadkari, an officer at the State Trading Corporation in Moscow and his family were the Indian guests at the birthday celebration. He and Anil got along very well. When he saw how much Anil enjoyed meeting and entertaining visitors from India, he began introducing a few appropriate ones to Anil. They were mainly businessmen from Mumbai and Pune. One of them, Mr. M.P. (Manohar) Rao, director of the export division of Thermax in Pune and Anil soon became very good friends. On every visit of Mr. Rao, they would meet either at his hotel or at Anil's place. A very cultured and good-natured man, Mr. Rao was also very interested in reading and in books. Like Anil, he too enjoyed drinking moderately, in the company of friends

with whom he could have a pleasant and stimulating conversation. Tamara also enthusiastically joined them most of the time.

Anil's father used to write to him off and on. Fortunately, money was now being regularly remitted to him. Anil also came to know that his mother's health had taken a turn for the worse and she had to be shifted to her brother's house in Mumbai. Looking after her was a difficult task, but Anil's maternal uncle and aunt (who was called Baby and was also Anil's cousin from his father's side) looked after her very well. So as not to worry Anil, they did not inform him of how serious her condition was. He was therefore quite shocked when in September 1974, he received a telegram from his uncle that his mother had expired. Anil's one consoling thought was that she was freed from the miserable and painful condition that she had to suffer through for several years.

The formal invitation for the Leipzig International film festival to be held from 23rd November to 3rd December arrived soon. This time, however, he would need to fund his own travel; the festival organizing committee would cover only food and local hospitality. The remuneration that he would get by writing a couple of articles would cover only a small fraction. However, the opportunity of watching films from many countries, possibilities for making new friends, and a chance to visit the interesting East Germany were the factors that tilted the decision in favour of going to Leipzig.

A Very Eventful Period

This would be his first international travel after arriving in Russia. The 32-hour journey was by train, and via Poland. He left on 21st November.

This visit was not a great success. A small error in the dates on his passport led to his detention for several hours at the border — and he was allowed to go when the KGB officer confirmed his bonafides by making a call to Moscow. Leipzig was a nice city — but only a few spoke English. He did not know German and his knowledge of Russian turned out to be more of a hindrance due to the anti-Soviet sentiment reflected on the faces of people when he tried to converse in Russian. The film festival was primarily for short films, and many of them were just political propaganda with a thin veneer of art. The subtitles were difficult to read; the interpreter spoke a little too fast making things difficult for Anil. One positive aspect was the friendliness of the delegates from Asia. Pakistanis and Bangladeshis were very cordial and Anil became good friends with them. One of them, Mr. Asadulla used to reside in Berlin, and when Anil had to halt in Berlin during his return journey and had nowhere to go, Mr. Asadulla was a great help. He very cordially invited Anil home, hosting a nice lunch for him.

A tired and hungry Anil reached Moscow in the morning. Tamara had already laid the table for breakfast, but he was surprised to see a glass of cognac and she urged him to drink it. After breakfast, she showed him the telegram that had arrived from India in the meanwhile — announcing

that his father had expired on 22nd November --- just a day after his departure to attend the Leipzig film festival. The passing away of both of his parents, that too in quick succession and within just one year of his leaving India was a severe blow for him; he became speechless with grief. He was particularly saddened because good days had just begun for him and he was looking forward to providing a much better life for his parents; such was Fate! The one thing that consoled him to some extent was that in the previous letter (the last one that he would write), his father had expressed his happiness at Anil's success --- and had written that Anil had indeed fulfilled his dream; he wanted to see Anil becoming a film actor and also get a prestigious job abroad.

A Short Visit to Pune — and then to Odessa Studios

As soon as he recovered from the shock, Anil started his preparations for going to Pune. The much-needed money for airfare was advanced by the office, thanks to Margo's efforts. The staff at the office of Air India was also helpful and quickly arranged a seat for him. It was essential that he reached Pune as early as possible, because his younger brother Abhay was all alone at home.

Fortunately, Abhay had handled the situation with a maturity surprising for his young age and had handled many of the practical matters quite competently. Many formalities needed to be completed for accessing the money that was stuck in his father's account —- this was essential for settling the medical bills. Abhay had done all the running around for that; Mr. Sarpotadar, a knowledgeable family friend was very supportive and helpful during these trying times. Anil has written that he was functioning like an automaton, handling the many practical matters quite mechanically. Realizing that his brother's salary may not be adequate even for paying the rent, Anil left enough money with him for three years' rent.

The future looked rather grim. His bank balance was zero. He had no place to call his own in Pune. The trials

of the previous few weeks were severe enough to cause premature greying of his hair -- soon he started looking rather aged. The life that he had to resume in Moscow did not look particularly attractive -- but there was no choice for him other than getting on with it. He also did not wish to share his grief with anyone after arriving in Moscow and tried his best to retain his image of a happy-go-lucky, carefree artist. It was once again winter in Moscow, but this time he was fully prepared to face it. He had proper clothes. His work was mainly from home, and he took care not to be out in the open for more than half an hour at a time. With such precautions, the Russian winter no longer felt like an ordeal.

One day Mr. Anufriyev sent Mr. Igor Udin, a young Russian artist who used to illustrate children's books, to Anil. Igor had recently taken charge as the art director of a new film that was being made by Odessa film studio. This three-part film, titled *Captain Nemo*, was an adaptation of Jules Verne's famous novel *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*. However, they had taken several liberties with the plot by bringing in a very major Indian connection. As per this film, the submarine Nautilus had reached the coast of India around 1857, Captain Nemo was in fact Nanasaheb Peshwe, one of the major leaders of the 1857 war of independence, and many of the soldiers who had participated in the 1857 war would probably be the crew of Nautilus. The director of the film, Mr. Levin was therefore looking for an Indian

A Short Visit to Pune — and then to Odessa Studios

advisor for the film. When Mr. Igor Udin came to know from Mr. Anufriyev that Mr. Anil Havaladar, a professional actor from India was working in the office of Progress Publishers, he immediately approached Anil. Happy to get the opportunity to visit Odessa, Anil readily agreed.

The air travel to Odessa took just a couple of hours. Mr. Levin, the director of the film took Anil home and showed him the various sketches that he had made for *Captain Nemo*. After some discussion about the film, he requested Anil to come to the studio the next day in the morning itself, so that after some makeup, a screen-test would be arranged for him. This was a complete surprise for Anil, who was under the impression that his role was going to be that of an advisor. However, the director would have liked Anil to act in the film as well -- casting him as a Maratha soldier. The only makeup that was needed was a moustache and a headgear. When in front of the camera, Anil conveyed a lot just by his eye movement — and all were happy with his acting. He received the invitation to return after a month for the shooting, and he was paid for the screen-test as well.

Anil returned to Odessa after a month with the contract to act in *Captain Nemo* in hand. The outdoor shooting was to take place at an old (14th century) Turkish fort, about 200 kms away from Odessa. This was going to be the Indian fort in the film. A couple of coconut trees on the seashore and a few large cutouts modelled after what one sees at the Elephanta caves near Mumbai completed the Indian

background.

Mr. Levin employed the Eisenstein¹ method for shooting. Since Papa Jagirdar also used this method, Anil was already familiar with it. He did not have to speak anything in any case. The only trouble was that he did not know horse-riding. Another difficult scene involved his having to jump from a great height — a ‘double’ had to be used in the end instead of him.

When it came to the matter of making payments, Odessa studios were well ahead of those in Mumbai; Anil never received the final instalment due to him! Anil did not mind this — a new experience and two free trips to Odessa provided more than enough compensation in his opinion.

Anil had a chance to act in another film by Odessa studio after a few years. The shooting was just for a day, and that too in Moscow. The film titled *To Orion*, was a science fiction movie, and Anil was given the role of the Secretary General of the United Nations in that film.

¹ Eisenstein’s film style revolves around montage, using the collision of shots to create new meanings, emotions, and ideas, rather than just smooth continuity. His key techniques include typeage (casting non-actors for typecasting) and dynamic camera work, but his signature is his five methods of montage (metric, rhythmic, tonal, over-tonal, intellectual) that generate conflict and meaning, famously seen in *Battleship Potemkin*.

Moscow Film Festivals

Anil had heard a great deal about the famous Moscow Film Festival and was keen on attending it. He had very narrowly missed the one in 1973 — it had concluded just four days before Anil's arrival. Thanks to Novosti, he covered the one held in 1975 as a local journalist.

The Indian delegates included old friends like Mr. Sathe, Basu Chatterjee and Basu Bhattacharya. A major highlight was the participation of Sanjeev Kumar. Anil and he knew each other because of his guest appearance in Anil's film. Anil took the opportunity to invite him home for dinner along with the other three — and he graciously agreed despite 11.30 PM being the only time convenient for all. The get together was wonderful — and Tamara admitted to being completely smitten by the exceptionally handsome Sanjeev Kumar. Little did they know that this was going to be the last time they would meet him!

The Indian delegates were a little tense because 1975 was the time when Emergency was in force in India. Gulzar's *Aandhi* was scheduled to be screened during the festival — but the screening was cancelled at the last minute without assigning any reason. Gulzar, being his usual serious and mature self, showed no reaction to this. Other notable delegates were Vidya Sinha, who had come with an introductory letter from Anil's Didi (the well-known thespian

Sulochana) and Anil arranged some sightseeing for her — and Shabana Azmi, who was then a newcomer. The ten days of the festival thus passed very enjoyably.

The Moscow film festival was held every two years, and up to 1981, Anil was quite regular in attending them. His interest in them however diminished over the years. The only point of interest that remained was the opportunity of meeting people from the Indian film industry — a bright spot in the otherwise monotonous life in Moscow. He mentions having met stalwarts like Amol Palekar, Smita Patil, Jabbar Patel. Mrs. Malati Tambe-Vaidya from the National Film Development Corporation became a good friend.

Documentaries, Tashkent Film Festival and Contract Renewal

Anil's three-year contract was coming to an end soon. By this time, there were few opportunities to write for Novosti. There were no more telefilms either. He himself had stopped his columns about the Soviet Union that he used to write regularly for Manohar — there was only so much that he could write on this topic! He had scrupulously avoided writing on any topic that was likely to be politically sensitive. In fact, even writing about ordinary things in the Soviet Union was turning out to be a tight rope walk. Pointing out even the most obvious faults was completely out of the question; it would have resulted in his immediate dismissal and that was not something he could afford at that time. The Soviets were extremely sensitive to criticism, more so when it was in writing, and they just hated criticism when it was by a foreigner.

During casual conversations in the office, Anil did occasionally mention about some of the things that he disliked in the Soviet Union — and he came to know much later that some of the officers held a grudge against him because of that. Luckily, Anil continued to get some good books. One of the notable ones was the novel *Hot Ice*, by Uri Bondarev, one of the very famous modern Russian authors. *Hot Ice*

was later made into a film. The novel was based on the battle of Stalingrad — and the author had had a direct experience of that battle, having fought in it! The Marathi section was slowly expanding — two young editors were appointed to begin with. On Anil's recommendation, Tatiana Werbitskaya, who was working in the Marathi section of Radio Moscow, was also selected as an editor. Little did Anil realize at that time that fourteen years later, she would cause considerable harm to Anil when he was going through a difficult patch.

One day Margo asked him whether he would be interested in translating commentaries of documentary films into Marathi — and to lending his voice. Anil enthusiastically accepted this new assignment; it was with the company "Film Export". It produced commentaries in 30-40 languages for documentaries. Translators from Mir and Progress Publishers and announcers from Moscow Radio were normally invited by them. Since the remuneration was attractive, these assignments were much sought after and often led to some friction as well. Soon after Anil accepted this assignment, he got a phone call from one of the announcers from the Marathi section of Radio Moscow who accused Anil of taking away bread from his mouth! Anil politely explained to him that his bread was in fact his job with Radio Moscow, and the assignment from Film Export would at best provide for a thin layer of butter on that bread. Anil also added that he had not approached the

company on his own, and that he was selected because of his prior experience of acting in films.

The man was unwilling to accept this argument, and a few harsh words were exchanged; the two of them were never again on talking terms. The aggrieved man never lost an opportunity of talking ill of Anil whenever he met any Marathi visitor to Moscow — thus proving the adage about two Marathi-speaking people never being able to get along with each other! Anil adds that it was the narrow-mindedness of this man that made him rather unpopular, despite his being a sincere worker devoted to his job.

Anil had yet another opportunity to attend the Tashkent Film Festival. The intervening period had led to a lot of changes — Tashkent had many multi-stories building now; Hotel Uzbekistan where they were accommodated being one of them. Anil now had greyed and had a crop of salt-pepper hair. Amongst the people whom he met were Devan Varma, Yash Chopra, Gulshan Rai, Shyam Benegal and Smita Patil. The two Basus and Gulzar were also present as always. Smita Patil was very keenly interested in the status of women in the Soviet Union and asked Anil a lot of questions; he provided quick and honest answers to all of them.

The then Information and Broadcasting Minister of India, Mr. Vidya Charan Shukla's speech was mainly to intimidate the Indian delegation, much to Anil's astonishment. No Indian newspapers were available to him in Moscow. BBC

Radio was the only reliable source of news about India, and those programs could not be properly heard either; the Soviet Union created a lot of interference using radio waves, though stopping short of jamming the BBC broadcast. The minister's speech, however, did provide Anil a glimpse of the extremely arrogant attitude of the Indian government that prevailed during those Emergency days.

Ms. Keera Pataki of the India section of Radio Moscow was also one of the delegates, and she introduced Anil to the officials of Radio Tashkent. That led to Radio Tashkent broadcasting Anil's ten-minute speech in Hindi, about his impressions of the film festival.

Anil also describes an amusing encounter in Tashkent. It was around six in the evening and a slightly bored Anil was in the mood to have a peg or two of whisky, but was reluctant to drink alone. Noticing a tall and slim Indian standing near the door of the lift, on the spur of the moment, Anil invited him to his room for a drink. To Anil's delight, he turned out to be a Marathi speaker — Mr. Anand Golikeri from Belgaum. Settled for many years in Trinidad and Tobago, he was a film distributor by profession and resided with his wife and children in his own bungalow in Port of Spain. During the course of the conversation, he invited Anil to Port of Spain. Anil did not take this very seriously, but Mr. Anand Golikeri proved true to his words and Anil did visit him subsequently. Anil writes that this is how drinking whiskey in moderation helps in making friends.

A long article by Anil, covering the Tashkent Film Festival, was published in the Sunday Edition of *Loksatta*, one of the most popular Marathi newspapers. From then on, thanks to the editor Mr. Vidyadhar Gokhale, he wrote a number of articles covering various film festivals in *Loksatta*.

Good news awaited Anil on his return to Moscow. Margo told him that Progress Publishers was planning to make an offer to him to renew his contract for three more years. This was indeed an official recognition of his excellent performance in the previous three years. Mr. Anufriyev had retired in the meanwhile, and Mr. Valentine Anisov has taken over as the new head of office. A man with an excellent command over English, Mr. Anisov had served in the United Nations for some time. He also had done stints in Europe, USA and India. His wife Larissa was an expert in Indian cuisine.

Along with the new contract, the office also gave Anil a return ticket to India to avail a small vacation before resuming duty. Travelling by Aeroflot was mandatory, however. There was no escape from this ordeal even if passengers were willing to spend their own money! Luckily, after the six-hour journey from Moscow to New Delhi, travelling to Mumbai by Indian Airlines was not forbidden.

Pune Visits and a Trip to Trinidad & Tobago

For the very first time, Anil was in a position to enjoy the vacation with a worry-free mind. The job was secure for the next three years, and accumulating a good amount of money in the savings account was a distinct possibility. He stayed with his old friend Mr. Shinde, the internationally acclaimed photographer. Anil's daughter Jui was staying with her grandparents, a short distance away. Spending a couple of hours with her every evening was now possible. When translating any children's books, he always had Jui in front of his mind's eye as a potential reader.

Evenings were often spent in Mr. Shinde's balcony over a peg or two of drinks. They were joined by Mr. Khanolkar, an amateur photographer who was Mr. Shinde's friend. Mr. Khanolkar's daughter, Mrs. Madhura Chuneekar used to pose as a model for Mr. Shinde. She and her husband Satish Chuneekar quickly became very good friends of Anil. He used to meet them in their house during every subsequent visit to Pune, and often, Satish's father would also join the drinking session. This friendship proved to be very close and long-lasting; in fact, Satish's home was the place where Anil began writing his autobiography many years later.

Anil returned to Moscow after a brief stay in Mumbai

Pune Visits and a Trip to Trinidad & Tobago

with his maternal uncle and aunt Baby; meeting Papa Jagirdar, Shrikant Moghe (who had married Dr Shobhana in the meanwhile) and Didi (Sulochana). He was happy to see that Tamara was there at the airport to receive him.

Anil had now decided to time his visits to India to coincide with the Moscow winter. So, when at the beginning of 1977 he was invited by Papa Jagirdar and Shrikant Moghe to write a script and dialogues, he accepted the offer with alacrity and landed in Mumbai as soon as he could! He funded his own travel; local hospitality was provided by Papa and Shrikant. The stay in Hotel Amigo on Cadell Road was most productive and in just 26 days, the assignment was completed.

During a short visit to Pune, he took the opportunity to meet his younger brother Abhay. He was shocked to see Abhay in bad shape. The 32-year old Abhay had completely lost his earlier good looks. He had discontinued his education and was working with a publisher, doing odd jobs. He did not lack creativity and initiative: he had started a weekly, and made quite a name for himself amongst journalists. He showed Anil the letters of appreciation received by him from many celebrities.

Anil was happy and praised Abhay whole-heartedly for his accomplishments. At this, Abhay burst into tears. It was only then that Anil realized that after the passing away of their parents, Abhay was all alone, and during this period of several years, had not received even a word of affection

from anyone! Anil tried to do as much for him as possible during the brief stay; he took him shopping, bought him new clothes, gave him some money, took him to Mumbai to see their uncle and aunt.

Abhay's health soon took a turn for the worse. Through his uncle's letters, he came to know that Abhay had been falling ill quite often. Eventually, on 24th June (Anil's birthday), there was a telegram from his uncle informing him that Abhay had expired. Anil writes that from then on, he never enjoyed his birthdays, feeling that some bad news or the other would come his way on that day (and that did happen on some occasions!); he also felt a little guilty about celebrating his birthday on the death anniversary of his younger brother. This period witnessed many deaths in his family. He lost two of his maternal uncles and a paternal uncle in the relatively short period following the deaths of his parents and his brother.

There was also an unusual telegram from his uncle, who wanted to enquire about Anil's health. It turned out later that some "well-wishers" of Anil had spread a rumour in Mumbai that Anil was suffering from abdominal cancer. It looked as if someone wanted Anil to die soon. Anil did suffer from stomach-related problems off and on — and the person starting the rumour had thus tried to make it sound credible! The mystery about this was never resolved and fortunately, everyone soon completely forgot about this.

Another unpleasant aftermath of his brother's passing

Pune Visits and a Trip to Trinidad & Tobago

away that Anil had to face was because his brother had run up huge debts. The man who lent him money was constantly pestering Anil's uncle to inform Anil that Anil was now under obligation to honour the debts! Anil had to explain to him through a letter, and also to the staff at the Indian embassy in person, that the agreement was strictly between Abhay and him, both being legally competent entities. Though this issue was thus sorted out, Anil came to know that despite his sending the money for rent very regularly, his brother had not paid the rent for many months. The owner had therefore promptly locked the house. Anil has ruefully written that he no longer had any place in India that he could call his own.

The only positive development during this period was the visit of Mr. Anand Golikeri from Trinidad and Tobago. He and his wife were visiting Moscow for the film festival and Anil was happy to invite them home. While leaving, Anand mentioned to Anil that he would soon be sending an air ticket to him to visit Trinidad and Tobago. Anil wanted to explore the possibility of getting a job there and dreamt of settling there with Tamara. Taking her along this time was of course impossible due to the then existing policies of the Soviet Union.

The visit to Port of Spain was not particularly enjoyable. Though Mr. Anand Golikeri was hospitable and introduced him to other friends who too were cordial, the city was not particularly safe. There was palpable discontent in the

people. Anil could notice some resentment towards Indians as well. After some sightseeing, he cut short his visit. There being no attractive employment opportunities for him, the tentative plan of settling there had already been abandoned by him by this time. A side benefit of this trip was that Anil was able to stay in London for several days, thanks to the arrangements made by his friend Mr. M.P. Rao of Thermax, Pune.

A little bit of sightseeing, watching a play, and visiting a few pubs was all that he could manage. He remarks that London almost reminded him of Mumbai — the streets were full of Asians; Englishman could be seen only infrequently. He also bought some perfumes for Tamara — much to her delight.

Expanding the Social Circle in Moscow

Mr. Inder Kumar Gujral was the new Ambassador to USSR, and his staff now included two Marathi families. Anil had a chance to meet Mr. Gujral's personal assistant, Mr. Ghatnekar. Having stayed in New Delhi for many years, the Ghatnekars were a jolly family and soon, Anil and Tamara got along with them famously. Visiting each other on weekends became a regular affair. Mrs. Ghatnekar taught Tamara a few Marathi phrases for "I like Anil very much", "Anil is my jewel" etc. Tamara also picked up some Maharashtrian recipes from her. Mr. Ghatnekar introduced Anil to Brigadier Apte. The next three-four years passed most enjoyably because of these friends. The three families visited many interesting places around Moscow.

A short lunch break at some picturesque picnic spot, and a pleasant drinking session were invariably a part of these trips. They used to celebrate Diwali together. Anil also got a chance to visit Yasnaya Polyana, the estate of Count Leo Tolstoy. The simple tombstone of this man who had asked "how much space does a man need" was, as per his own wishes, located in a spot surrounded by three tall trees.

To Anil goes the credit of translating 7-8 short stories by Tolstoy. These include *Two Hussars*, the very first story penned by Tolstoy and *After the Ball Dance*, which was published after Tolstoy's death. The collection also includes *The*

Kreutzer Sonata, and Anil has given the title *Cursed Music* (शापित संगीत) for it — that was also chosen to be the title of the collection. This book proved to be quite popular; two editions with at least 3000 copies each were printed.

While attending the parties given by the Ghatnekars and the Aptés, Anil also became good friends with many others in the Embassy — Commodore Pawaj Jain and his wife Poonam, the official interpreter-translator of the embassy Mr. Santosh Ganguly and his wife Sapana etc. Due to Mr. Gujral's gentle and friendly nature, the Ambassador was very popular with all Indian residents of Moscow. He also arranged for Indian newspapers to be made available through the embassy. All were also invited to the Embassy on 15th August on 26th January for a tea party.

Anil received an invitation to attend a film festival in Leipzig. Though such festivals now had little attraction for him, any break from the monotonous routine was always welcome. The workload was light and his speed of working ensured that he had a lot of free time — and surplus funds for the travel. This, together with the fact that the organizing committee had extended a very cordial invitation to him, firmed up his plans to visit Leipzig. The train journey was unexpectedly fruitful — exactly what he used to dream about while reading romantic novels during his younger days. His co-traveller turned out to be a very beautiful young woman, a German who could speak Russian. She readily accepted his invitation to have a drink with him.

Expanding the Social Circle in Moscow

They liked each other's company; she promised to meet him again in Leipzig — and kept her promise.

All the days of the festival were spent in her intimate company instead of the movie hall — a heavenly experience. At lunch time, he was the object of much friendly banter for this from the friendly Bulgarian delegates, staying in the same hotel. A film festival was soon going to be held in Varna in Bulgaria, and Anil received an invitation for that festival too.

The Leipzig stay however ended on a very depressing note. On the last day, a visit to Weimar and to Buchenwald was arranged. Weimar was okay — but the visit to Buchenwald was an absolutely horrifying experience. The guide who showed them around the concentration camp had himself been interned in the camp during the war; the dark circles still present under his eyes was an eloquent testimony to the untold suffering that he and others had undergone. Hearing about the sheer brutality of those days and looking at the chilling exhibits was too much for Anil to bear. He lost his appetite for several days; the awful scenes used to vividly float in front of his eyes without any warning. He just stopped going to Leipzig after that.

Marriage Plans — and Hiccups During Contract Renewal

The Marathi section of Progress Publishers had expanded over the years. It had now employed a chief editor, two assistant editors, a proofreader, and a copy writer. Anil used to jokingly remark that he thus provides livelihoods for at least five Russians! Anil's translation work was going on in full swing; a collection of short stories by Chekov being notable amongst them. He continued to translate a few books of a political nature along with this literary work. During this period, he also got an opportunity to translate the famous *Ten Days that Shook the World* by the American author John Reed. The book was about the October revolution, and the author had witnessed it first-hand; he was in Russia during that time.

Anil's friend circle continued to expand. It now included the staff of Air India — pilots, engineers, pursers. Mr. Prabhakar Kanhere, a purser, became very friendly because his wife, Kunda was an actress, and Anil had praised her in some of the reviews that he used to write in Pune long ago. Another notable addition was Captain Subhash Thakur, a pilot who had earlier served in the Indian Air Force. He was from Ratnagiri, and was nicknamed Theeba; Anil used to call him Theebaraje (Theeba being the name of the king

Marriage Plans — and Hiccups During Contract Renewal

of Burma who was imprisoned in Ratnagiri by the Britishers). There were many who visited Russia on business, but Anil was unique in being an accomplished Marathi translator. He also preferred to talk in Marathi, so Theeba was particularly fond of Anil.

Several of Theeba's friends also used to accompany him for parties in Anil's house. They also used to bring many things from India for Anil and Tamara — tea, coffee, basmati rice, pickles, Old Monk rum and what not. Once when onions had suddenly vanished from Moscow markets, Theeba even brought two kilos of onions for Tamara. The customs raised an objection — but said that if all the roots of the onions were cut off, they would agree to release them. Poor Theeba and his colleagues thus spent a couple of hours cutting off the roots of those onions. Fruits were on the prohibited list, but Theeba had brought fresh Mangoes for Tamara — who had never tasted a mango till then. Tomatoes and cucumbers were such rare commodities in Russia that they were much sought after and were horribly expensive. One New Year Eve was celebrated with Theebaraje with champagne and the tomatoes brought by him.

Anil by now felt so comfortable in Moscow that he seriously started considering settling down in Moscow. His friends from India also had been urging Tamara to visit them in India. It was Mr. Ghatnekar who one day said to Anil "Its high time that you married Tamara. You have any way been staying like husband and wife — better now if you

get married to each other.” Anil also agreed with him; he and Tamara were staying together for five years. The main reason that he had not taken this step earlier was because to obtain permissions of the two governments was a very complicated and difficult process. Now, with Mr. Ghatnekar himself being the personal secretary to the ambassador, obtaining the required clearances from the Indian side was no longer a problem. Anil therefore broached the topic to Tamara, and she accepted the proposal. She also obtained the necessary letter of consent from her mother, a mandatory requirement in such circumstances.

As always, when everything looked fine, unexpected trouble cropped up. Progress Publishers in Moscow had partnered with *Lokvangmay Gruh* of Mumbai for selling their Marathi books. *Lokvangmay Gruh* was manned by some old-fashioned members of the Communist party of India, who were unhappy that Anil had got this lucrative post in Moscow. They took the opportunity to create trouble for Anil by claiming that Anil’s translation of the title of the book *Ten Days that Shook the World* was not acceptable to them, and they simply refused to accept the printed copies. Anil had anticipated that they were likely to create some hurdle for him, and the Novosti officials were also aware of these machinations.

Progress Publishers, however, were in a dilemma because they did not have enough knowledge of Marathi to decide on the merit of issue. They, however, could immediately

Marriage Plans — and Hiccups During Contract Renewal

make out that the caucus in Mumbai was up to some mischief, namely, they were keen on replacing Anil by their own man! The fact that the Marathi section of Progress Publishers in Moscow came into being because of Anil and was flourishing now meant nothing to them. All this unfortunately affected the renewal of the contract; Mr. Anisov now took a stand that because of this, the contract now would be renewed only for one year instead of the usual three.

Anil initially was totally unwilling to accept this — he kept on arguing that it was not his fault at all and all this was the conspiracy of the group in Mumbai. His superiors could understand that he was right, but the issue of selling the books had to be somehow dealt with. Margo tried her best to sort this out, but ultimately Anil decided to back down and accepted a one-year contract — there was really no choice. He had exhausted all his money in India due to his brother's illness and other related expenses. He however decided to go to Mumbai to get to the bottom of this "affair of the title".

In Mumbai, he came to know that the group in *Lokvangmay Gruh* had decided to send Mr. Prafulla Mokashi, then working in the office of *Soviet Desh* in Mumbai, to replace Anil. He met Mr. Mokashi and explained to him the situation in Moscow. Mr. Mokashi's children were still studying — and once he realized from Anil's account as to how difficult it would be for his family to stay in Moscow, he

decided to decline the opportunity to relocate to Moscow. That eventually turned out to be a very wise decision — Mr. Mokashi rising later to a very high post in *Soviet Desh* itself.

When Anil had left for India, Mrs. Shaila Dange had given some letters to be posted after landing in India — this was a very common practise. It turned out that she had written a letter to her father, Comrade S.A. Dange, one of the very senior and respected leaders of the Communist Party of India; she had also explained Anil's situation and had argued in his favour. After a few days, he received an invitation to visit Comrade Dange. He was cordial and sympathetic, and even offered an opportunity to Anil to contribute articles to the newspapers published by the Communist Party of India. It did seem that he would help Anil in some way or the other — and things changed rather unexpectedly, *Lokvangmay Gruh* subsequently placed an order even for the second edition of the book that they had declined earlier.

One positive fallout of this whole affair was that Mr. Anisov began to trust Anil's judgements completely; Anil had already won the complete trust of Margo much earlier. In fact, after a while, Mr. Anisov even extended his one-year contract till 1982, putting forward the oft quoted "changing horses midstream is not a good policy" argument in support of his decision. Anil also got an assignment from Novosti to visit Kiev, the capital of Ukraine, to write a series of 4-5 articles for Youth Review. He took this opportunity

Marriage Plans — and Hiccups During Contract Renewal

to write a detailed article about that visit in the magazine Kirloskar. This article was published in the January 1981 issue of Kirloskar. This long article has been reproduced in the book.

A Visit to Kiev

A keen and perceptive observer of nature as well as people, Anil writes very entertainingly, providing a lot of interesting historical details about Kiev, and about its very rich culture. A brief mention is made here of some of the parts of the article connected with Anil's profession.

The first visit was to the office of the magazine *Vasesvit* (a Ukrainian word meaning the World) to meet Dr. Mikitenko, the Associate Editor, and Mr. Terekh, who looked after the Afro-Asian Section. Anil immediately told them that he knew that their magazine was the first one in the USSR to publish the translation of the famous Marathi novel *Mumbai Dinank*, and that was why he, a Marathi man himself, had decided to begin the trip to Kiev by visiting their office; this established an immediate rapport. Dr. Mikitenko had toured India in 1976, had met many renowned Indian authors and acquainted himself with the current Indian literature. This had resulted in a special issue of *Vasesvit* dedicated to Indian literature being published in 1976 — with 75,000 printed copies, the usual figure being 50,000.

The novel mentioned above, and some poems of Mr. Narayan Surve also translated into Ukrainian were published in this special issue. Dr. Mikitenko was happy to show Anil some of the Marathi books that he had been presented with during his India visit — and Anil in turn

took the opportunity of mentioning to him the names of 8-10 Marathi authors, hoping that one or more of these would make it to the pages of this magazine.

The next morning's visit was to the office of *Ranak* (Ukrainian word for Morning), a magazine for youngsters (age group 15-30). The editorial staff was young as well, enthusiastic and competent; each one of them having authored a few books. They were quite keen to know about Indian youth and asked a lot of questions; they also promised to provide, in some of the forthcoming issues, a glimpse of the life of Indian youth to their readers.

Films had always been the first love for Anil — so a visit to the famous Dovzenko studio was a must. He has written at length about this studio (a staff of 2100, with about 120 actors-actresses on role, about 16 full length films and 12 films for TV being made every year, all in Ukrainian of course) and admits to being thoroughly impressed by the professionalism seen in all the departments.

The second love being theatre, a visit to the Evan Franco theatre and an interesting meeting with the very accomplished Regissar Aglobin has also been described in detail, bringing out the many impressive facets of Ukrainian theatre. He could also see a couple of plays in this visit — and they turned out to be excellent as well.

Anil also describes his sightseeing trips to many places of considerable historical, cultural and spiritual/religious significance.

Anil Weds Tamara

A letter from the Indian government was needed before the embassy office could provide the necessary permission for Anil's marriage. The letter arrived much later than expected. Some more formalities needed to be completed because Anil, though single, was a divorcee. Anil had to explain to the First Secretary at the Indian Embassy that his divorce had been with mutual consent, with no liabilities for either of the parties. Fortunately for Anil, the First Secretary was a very understanding man, and he in turn explained the situation to the Indian government, and the problem was sorted out. All these long and unnecessary delays, however, caused tremendous mental stress, and that very adversely affected Anil's health. Finally, all the required permissions from the Indian side arrived.

Tamara had no idea of all these problems that Anil had gone through; he had not shared any of this so as to not bother her. She herself was also having a very difficult time. Her bosses used to trouble her merely because she was going to marry a foreigner. She had to change jobs often. When it came to marital fidelity, Anil candidly admits that he did stray a few times from the straight and narrow. Tamara was, however, a firm believer in the sanctity of her relationship with Anil and was never unfaithful to Anil — and had always spurned the advances from her superiors

in her office, which made matters all the more unpleasant for her. Having to procure a large number of documents from various offices was a most humiliating experience for both of them; the Soviet officials used to behave very rudely with them.

Finally, the marriage took place on 29th May 1980. The Ghatnekars were present, and so was Tamara's daughter Tanya. The Russian lady officer of the Special Marriage Registration Office for Foreigners did not bother even to look up when accepting the signed forms!

That evening, Anil threw a grand party at the famous Hotel Metropolis. Fifteen Indian and Russian couples danced gracefully to the music. Tamara looked absolutely stunning in the green sari — a wedding present to her from Balasahb Ghatnekar; Tamara knew how to drape a sari elegantly, unlike most European women.

An Enjoyable Visit to India with Tamara

Anil was aware of the extremely elaborate, complex and long-drawn-out process ahead of him if Tamara had to accompany him to India. He therefore started on it right away after the wedding; the first step was that he had to write a formal letter to his wedded wife Tamara inviting her to accompany him to India. This had to be countersigned by the First Secretary of the Indian Embassy before it could be submitted to the Soviet Authorities. After a wait of a few months, the permission arrived in October, and they decided to leave for India in January, so as to avoid the Russian Winter.

One day, Tamara's mother unexpectedly arrived to meet Anil, looking extremely scared. Many of her neighbours had strongly advised her against sending Tamara to India with Anil — saying that the marriage is just a pretext, and once they reach India, Anil will simply sell off Tamara for a huge sum of money. It seems that there had been many instances of Arab husbands selling off their Russian wives. Anil was greatly amused, but he, with a serious face, managed to convince Tamara's mother that he would bring Tamara back safe and sound. Anil wryly remarks that he did not believe these stories one bit — in his opinion, Russian women were very capable, practical, strong-minded and street-smart; if anything, it would be they who would have sold off their

An Enjoyable Visit to India with Tamara

husbands!

Finally, on 5th January 1981, they boarded the Air India flight. Tamara was delighted with the tastefully decorated interior and the courteous service — in stark contrast with what she used to experience during her travel by Aeroflot within the USSR.

The India visit was a great success. All his Indian friends who used to meet him in Moscow reciprocated the hospitality most cordially. Tamara got along very well with his uncle and aunt in Mumbai, with Jui, with other friends of Anil in Pune and Mumbai. Parties and drinking sessions in Mumbai and Pune, visits to Ajanta and Agra, a week-long wonderful stay in Goa, extensive shopping by Tamara in New Delhi — all this made the trip a very memorable one. Anil mentions just one incident about the clash of cultures. Being very fond of sunbathing, Tamara went to the terrace of Anil's uncle's house in Mumbai, wearing a swimsuit. This caused quite a sensation in that traditional, middle-class locality; all the neighbouring balconies immediately filled with wide-eyed people, and some seemed considerably annoyed. When Jui noticed this, she alerted Anil, who brought Tamara back from the terrace. She, however, was in turn very annoyed with Anil, despite his having explained to her about the serious exception the neighbours had for her "indecent" dress!

On returning to Moscow, however, Tamara gave everything away to her daughter — all the clothes and even the

jewellery that Anil had gifted her. Anil was even more miffed because Tamara had not even thought about giving any gift to Jui.

This seemed to be the beginning of the marital discord that was soon to escalate. Tamara used to spend a lot of money for buying things for her daughter; Tanya had now moved to Tamara's apartment, and money for the expensive furniture was of course provided by Anil. She used to complain that the money given by Anil for running the household was inadequate. However, Anil soon realized that the prices that she mentioned to him were much higher than what he himself saw when he had visited the markets. She stopped doing that when he brought this to her notice — but the feeling that she was cheating him in these matters was not a pleasant one. Anil liked going out in the evening and so did Tamara, but on this issue their preferences were different; she liked to jump from shop to shop on the way, he preferred to stroll in quiet parks.

The translation job was going on well — Maxim Gorky's autobiographical trilogy was an assignment that Anil really enjoyed. For the first one, titled *Childhood*, the second edition quickly followed the first one. The Russian title of the second book in the trilogy is *Amongst People*, while *My Apprenticeship* is the title of the English translation. The book is mainly about Gorky's struggle and wandering from place to place. Anil spent a lot of time and effort for coming up with a suitable title for the Marathi version — and finally

An Enjoyable Visit to India with Tamara

came up with “Ten Directions” — a well-known Marathi phrase that is meant for describing just such wandering.

The Varna Film Festival

Anil's Bulgarian friends, whom he had met in Leipzig, kept their promise and invited Anil for the Varna Film festival that was to take place in June 1981. He accepted the invitation and started preparing for the journey. Tamara objected to his going by himself — he overruled her objection saying that the invitation was for him alone. She threatened to leave the house. He nevertheless left for Varna — but with a far from peaceful mind.

Anil was all praise for the Bulgarians. The arrangements were excellent. The quality of the films was exceptionally good. He strongly felt that this festival did not get the attention that it really deserved. He even voiced this when he met Mr. Jabbar Patel in Moscow much later. He then came to know that Mr. Jabbar Patel had taken his advice, and had sent one of his classics, the Marathi film *Umbartha*, to the Varna Film Festival and it had even won an award.

The visit was also notable for the warm and cordial interaction with two Bulgarians. A young journalist, Valentin, after a brief acquaintance, invited Anil home — in the town Silistra (on the Danube) about four hours' drive from Varna. There were no restrictions on foreigners travelling within Bulgaria. Valentin and his family were most hospitable, he even took Anil next day to visit his mother, and then to his elder brother, and then to his office. Anil was very touched

The Varna Film Festival

by the genuine affection and felt rather sad when they had to part. On returning to Varna, Lily, another journalist from another city was equally hospitable, and took him for a visit to her aunt's place in Varna. Anil's trip to Bulgaria was thus an emotional experience.

Anil Joins *Raduga*

Soon, Progress Publishers acquired a second Marathi translator. Mr. Shrinivas Korlekar was a manager in *Soviet Desh* in Mumbai, and he had taken this job in Moscow after his retirement. Anil had known him from his *Soviet Desh* days, and both had a good opinion of each other and were on good terms; though Mr. Korlekar was very much senior to Anil, he was fond of Anil's acting as well as writing. He was also a member of the Communist Party, so people at the *Lokvangmay Gruh* in Mumbai were happy with this development and all was well in the Marathi section.

Another positive development in the office soon took place. It was decided to start *Raduga*; Progress Publishers was split into two publications — Progress and *Raduga* (meaning Rainbow). Progress was going to handle books dealing with political, social and economic issues; *Raduga* was entrusted with handling novels, short stories, children's literature, etc. Staff members were free to join any one of these. Anil of course opted for *Raduga*, free at last of having to deal with political books; Mr. Korlekar preferred to remain with Progress. The new arrangements were thus to everyone's satisfaction.

Anil's main objective was thus accomplished. He started translating many Russian and Soviet books into Marathi. These included writings of universally acclaimed classics of

Anil Joins Raduga

writers like Tolstoy, Dostovesky, Pushkin, Gogol, etc. He also translated a wonderful short story collection of Vasili Shukshin, a very talented writer, director and actor. This free-spirited artist from Siberia had to face a lot of harassment, injustice and discrimination from the government. He passed away at the young age of 47 and still commands a lot of respect. Anil too had a taste of this injustice.

One of the best stories in the collection, titled *I Wish to Remain Alive* had to be omitted from the Marathi translation of the collection, due to the objections raised by an old member of the Press Committee. For Anil, this was truly a case of Hamlet without the Prince of Denmark! The story finds place in the English translation, but not in the Marathi version. Anil was deeply hurt because of this, and the scar remained for a very long time.

By this time, the period of the third contract was coming to a close. The renewal this time was a mere formality; he was thus assured of employment up to 1985. As usual, he planned to visit India during winter, and this time the office provided air tickets both for him and his wife Tamara, though travelling by Aeroflot was compulsory.

Anil's main problem during India visits was finding accommodation; staying in hotels for a month or two was not something he could afford. He had to contact many friends in advance and make some arrangements. By this time, Mr. Balasaheb Ghatnekar was allotted government quarters in New Delhi, so they stayed with him for four

days. In Mumbai, he stayed with his uncle in Ghatkopar for a few days. His pilot friend Theebaraje had invited Anil and Tamara to stay with him in his spacious flat at Juhu, so Anil went to meet him to find out if that invitation was still on. It was — but the only problem there was that his cook-cum-valet had left, and there were no provisions at all at home. Theebaraje was going away for 15-20 days, and he handed over the keys of the flat to Anil immediately, saying that he and Tamara were most welcome to stay there.

The stay in Theeba's house was comfortable — Tamara having taken charge of shopping and cooking. The one thing she enjoyed most was the ease of buying provisions — everything was available in plenty and that too in nearby shops in complete contrast to the shortages and long queues that she was used to in Moscow. She soon became confident enough to go on her own even by hiring a taxi.

Anil used this time to attempt a Marathi adaptation of a modern Russian play. A reading of it also took place at a friend's place, but the reaction of a producer who was invited for it was not favourable. Anil himself was not too happy with his adaptation; he felt that this was partly because of his lack of experience at adaptations, and partly because the theme was alien to Marathi culture.

Many friends continued to be very hospitable like previous times. Thanks to Basu Chatterjee and Basu Bhattacharya, Anil and Tamara could get passes for attending the New Delhi Film Festival; they found the experience quite

Anil Joins Raduga

enjoyable. Anil's journalist friend from Russia, Mr. Leonid Abramov now headed the Soviet Information division in New Delhi. Anil had a great time chatting with him, while his wife Alina and Tamara enjoyed themselves by going shopping.

Their stay at Pune was arranged by his friend Mr. M.P. Rao. Unfortunately, Mr. Shinde was no more, having succumbed to cancer in the meanwhile. Anil could meet Madhura and Satish Chuneekar though. He also tried his best to buy an apartment in Pune but was unsuccessful. Tamara was troubled by the heat and dust during this trip. It was becoming evident that settling down in India was not going to be a feasible option for her. In fact, because of Anil's love for Tamara, he wanted to spare her the uncomfortable life that she would have to face by relocating to India. On the other hand, it looked as if Anil would not be comfortable in settling down in Moscow in the long run, and Papa Jagirdar and Basu Chatterjee seemed genuinely worried about how Anil would manage his sunset years without the company of his partner. Anil, however, felt that he was still young, and was confident of being able to handle his life well.

After returning to Moscow, Anil noticed that Tamara began criticizing many things about India and Indian people. Anil tried not to argue back. He was also a little worried about her liberal spending — though often he himself was the beneficiary; she used to look after him very well. She was also proud of his accomplishments and was very

affectionate towards him. Tanya, however, used to somehow manage to spoil this good atmosphere whenever she dropped in. Tanya had her very good qualities — even though she was staying on her own, she neither smoked, nor drank, nor go in for sexual relationships. Tamara had found a job for her and she could earn enough to support herself. She was goodlooking too, but had to wear spectacles, had not acquired a boyfriend and had developed an inferiority complex. She also liked to buy good things and would demand money from Tamara — leading to bitter arguments between the mother and the daughter.

Some relief from this unhappy state was obtained when a friend invited him to London. The ten-day stay was pleasant; he had a very enjoyable time, meeting several friends. The trip was a little tiring though — and the good mood was spoiled by Tamara and Tanya who blamed him for not bringing them adequate gifts.

Tired of all this, Anil sought solace elsewhere. He became friendly with Veronica, a journalist with Moscow TV. A divorcee, she was staying in a shared apartment. They soon became very close, and Anil spent many peaceful evenings in her room. Unfortunately, he had to end this relationship after some time; the expenditure needed to satisfy Veronica's liking for new clothes soon reached a level that he found hard to maintain. All Russian women were very fond of foreign-made clothes and expected expensive gifts from foreigners like Anil; they were under the impression that

Anil Joins Raduga

all foreigners always had plenty of money. Their meetings soon tapered off and eventually Anil stopped meeting her.

A Visit to Georgia and Armenia

During Anil and Tamara's visit to the resort Pichunda, they met Nelli Totaladze. A professor now in a polytechnic in Tbilisi, the capital of Georgia, she had studied in Moscow and used to stay in a hostel near Anil's apartment. She also remembered seeing Anil and Tamara during her stay in Moscow. When she left Pichunda, she extended an invitation to them to visit her in Tbilisi, the capital of Georgia. She proved to be true to her word. To Anil and Tamara's pleasant surprise, one day they indeed received a phone call from Nelli, renewing her invitation. Accordingly, Anil and Tamara took the two-hour flight to Tbilisi.

Anil's account of their visit to Georgia is yet another example of his skill in writing in a very entertaining way about the places visited by him. The visit was very interesting, eventful and enjoyable. The families that Anil and Tamara met were most affectionate and became very close friends of Anil and Tamara — to the extent that one of the little girls used to address Anil using the term meant for addressing an elder brother. They continued to correspond with each other even after Anil had relocated to India. Anil and Tamara made another visit to Georgia much later, just to meet and be with these people.

Life in Moscow continued to run well. There were some happy occasions like the wedding of Tamara's niece Lyena.

A Visit to Georgia and Armenia

These were followed by sad ones, like the passing away of Tamara's mother. Anil writes quite scathingly about the poor medical facilities, the rude behaviour, the corruption seen at every stage. His health was not particularly good due to lack of exercise. Sitting at home for most of the time was boring. The work in the office was not particularly exciting or challenging. Making new friends with some of the Indians who arrived in Moscow and stayed for varying durations was a silver lining; weekends and evenings spent with them provided some much-needed relief.

The real problem was that he stared at an uncertain future. Moscow life no longer held any charm. He had nowhere to go in India. The books translated by him were selling well, but his heart was no longer in the work. He was unpopular with communists because he was not a communist; the other side despised him because he worked for communists. Travelling whenever an opportunity arrived was one way of spending time for him during this phase; the next trip was to Armenia. One day, an Armenian friend of Tamara's dropped in, and she brought her sister-in-law along with her. Both were teachers in a school in Yerevan in Armenia. Both of them were jolly and of a friendly nature and Anil and Tamara got along very well with them. The trip to Armenia was thanks to them. The visit took place in October because that was when the weather in Armenia was most pleasant.

Like he had done for the trip to Georgia, Anil has given an interesting and readable account of the people and the

places in Armenia. There were some adventures too, but nothing connected with writing, films, theatre. Both of them became fond of the people there; they too became fond of Anil and Tamara, and another visit took place later, just for meeting and spending time with these affectionate friends. Anil also admits to feeling a little sad on returning to Moscow, so affectionate were the friends in Armenia.

Acting in a Film in the Gorky Studio, Moscow

Anil had been staying in that apartment for more than a decade now, but so far there has been no interactions with any of the neighbours; Anil was the only foreigner, nor just in the building but on the whole street. One day, Mr. Gilya Hussainov on the tenth floor invited Anil and Tamara to their flat. Tamara knew Gilya and had recently been introduced to his wife Luba. It turned out that the invitation was because it was Luba's birthday. Luba was Russian, while Gilya was a Tartar Muslim. He was a former football player. Though aged, his movements were quick, and he used to teach football to children.

Even when he was seated, his feet used to always perform some movement or the other — and Anil mentions that he felt like filming the attractive movements with a camera. They began to meet each other once in a while. At the dinner hosted by Gilya on the eve of the New Year, Anil met a friend of Luba, who happened to be an assistant director at the Gorky Studio in Moscow, famous for making films for children. They were soon going to produce a science fiction-based film, and one of the characters in the film was an Indian scientist. She asked Anil whether he was willing to consider acting in the film, and since Anil did have some

free time, he readily agreed.

Soon he received a call from the studio. The director promptly gave him a photocopy of the script and dialogues. The makeup man was asked to stitch a Jodhpur Coat for Anil. The film was titled *Sem Stikhiy* meaning seven elements (like the *pancha mahabhootas*). Anil had to act in only 4-5 scenes, but they were important once; these were the ones where the story changed track. The heroine was a stage actress from Moscow, the hero was from Latvia, and the rest of the actors were from Moscow itself. Anil was happy with the Unit. There was not much of an interaction with the Russians, but the young Director, the two Assistant Directors and the Latvian hero used to freely chat with Anil.

The shooting was to take place in a cultural palace in a Moscow suburb. Some Korean and African students had accompanied them as they were going to be a part of the mob scenes. The main actors were provided with a room each for relaxing before the start of the shooting. As Anil was sitting quietly by himself in his room, one of the Assistant Directors suddenly dashed in and warned him to remain confined to his room till further instructions. It seems that KGB agents had appeared on the scene and had promptly sent all the students back to Moscow; foreigners were apparently not permitted to enter this suburb! Since Anil had an important role to play, the staff had decided to keep him hidden till the departure of the KGB.

Acting in a Film in the Gorky Studio, Moscow

Happy at the opportunity to act, Anil was in his element. The sight of cameras and lights enthused him still further, and for scene after scene, he received quick “okays”. The director was happy. The makeup man felt that any additional makeup, moustache, beard etc were quite unnecessary. In the story, the Indian scientist was supposed to initially oppose the experiment suggested by the Russian scientist, but once convinced of its merit, was shown to support it strongly. The shooting was for a week and a half. The outdoor shooting was to take place in Crimea, but since none of the scenes involved Anil, he did not get the chance to go there. Happy with Anil’s performance, Gorky Studio paid him one and a half times the contract amount.

The film ran well when released; Tamara’s friend’s son watched it five times. Anil’s name figured prominently in the credit titles. However, this turned out to be Anil’s last appearance in films. Opportunities in Russia were very limited, and no Indian producer was likely to approach him. Anil, too, found that acting had ceased to be of any interest to him.

The Russian Approach to Rest & Recuperation

In the USSR, every employee was entitled to a fully paid leave for 24 days per year. The Soviet citizens invariably used this occasion to visit some resort or the other — often located on beaches or by mountainsides. June-July was preferred for visiting the Baltic republics of Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania; places near the Black Sea were preferred between June and October.

Anil gives an account of his various such vacations to many of the republics in the USSR. His skill in capturing the salient features of the towns he visited and the people he came across is exceptional. His only regret was that he could not visit Vladivostok, and could not travel by the Trans-Siberian Railway — but adds that having a couple of unfulfilled desires also adds spice to one's life!

Mumbai-Kovalam-Singapore-Bangkok

After having spent many such vacations with Tamara in the USSR, Anil felt that it was high time that he had a vacation in India, visiting some nice places with his uncle, aunt and Jui. Accordingly, he booked his ticket for 1st November 1984 but just the previous evening, to their shock, they heard the BBC News reporting the assassination of Mrs. Indira Gandhi! Tamara, a staunch fan of Mrs. Gandhi, somehow located her photograph from an old newspaper and lit a candle in front of it. Anil left for India with mixed feelings.

He camped at his uncle's place in Ghatkopar. His uncle and aunt had just returned from a trip to Kashmir. After some discussion, they decided to go South; four days on Kovalam beach, followed by a visit to Trivandrum and from there to Kanyakumari and the Swami Vivekanand Memorial Rock. Jui was delighted. They flew to Trivandrum and Jui enjoyed her first experience of air travel. The four days stay at Kovalam also was a good opportunity to get to know Jui better. She had just completed her schooling and was studying in Junior College in Pune. Anil used to speak to her in Russian and she used to respond in French; this style of conversation became a permanent feature between them. Anil also used his time in India to read Marathi books and watch plays, etc.

This trip with the family was followed by a trip with

friends to Bangkok and Singapore — a very interesting, enjoyable and relaxing one — visits to night clubs and massage parlours, drinking vodka on the beach, sightseeing, a little bit of shopping for buying gifts for Jui, Tamara and Tanya (and chocolates for his aunt; Baby was very fond of chocolates).

Shifting to a New Apartment

As soon as Anil returned to Moscow, a new problem had cropped up. The new tenants who had been allotted the apartment just above them turned out to be drunkards. They almost always forgot to close the bathroom taps when they went out — and water used to be dripping and then flowing from the ceiling of Anil's apartment. Tamara found this absolutely unbearable, and she took up the responsibility of sorting this out; having worked in the ministry earlier, she was very familiar with the process of sending applications, contacting the police and she approached the people in Anil's office. After struggling for one year, the problem was solved by Anil's office by allotting a new apartment to them in an altogether different place.

This turned out to be an excellent development on many counts. It was bigger — almost one and a half times the size of the earlier apartment. It was also in a good locality — just next to the Skolnik park. Tamara's cousin and his wife were professional decorators, and Anil was more than happy to pay them their fees for the very good job done very sincerely by them. With Tamara's expert handling, shifting everything to the new apartment could be easily accomplished, and they occupied the new apartment about a week before Anil signed his fourth contract with Raduga. The renewal of the contract was not without some

hiccups — there was not enough work for the Marathi section, and Anil had to face some anxious months worrying about this — but eventually, the contract was renewed till 1988. Moreover, as per the custom, as soon the new contract was signed, Anil received air tickets from the office for himself and for Tamara to visit India during December and January.

The beginning of this journey was marred by an exasperating experience. As they got ready for leaving for the airport, Anil was astounded to see a fully decked Tamara, resplendent with diamond ornaments. Knowing that any suggestion to her about not taking these along would only result in her flying into a rage, Anil did not open his mouth. Not unexpectedly, the customs officer at the airport informed Tamara that taking so much jewellery out of the USSR was permitted only for celebrities; ordinary citizens could take along only three such items. The details about the three had to be recorded, and these very ornaments had to be brought back, failing which a huge fine would be imposed.

A crestfallen Tamara went to deposit all her ornaments in the customs office. This, however, was just the beginning of the ordeal. While she was away, the bags were being examined. The scanner kept on beeping when it was moved over Tamara's bag. To the officer's query as to whose bag it was, Anil honestly mentioned that it was his wife's. The officer opened the bag and found a pair of costly earrings

Shifting to a New Apartment

sticking to Tamara's vanity bag. He immediately accused her of trying to smuggle ornaments. A superior officer arrived next and examined their passports. He was convinced that Anil had no role in this and offered to let him leave but said that they would detain Tamara. This was of course unacceptable to Anil. He pleaded with the officers, trying to point out to them how it was just an honest mistake on her part, and also offered to pay whatever fine they may impose for this misdemeanour. Fortunately, the customs officers agreed to this. They did put this on record and imposed a huge fine.

An utterly exhausted Anil, with a dry throat sank into his seat in the plane. A contrite Tamara kept on apologizing. When there was no sign of the air hostess bringing a glass of water, she herself went and got a bottle of mineral water for him. Anil also quickly gulped a few pegs of whisky, not uttering a word and trying to keep his anger under control. Mr. Balasaheb Ghatnekar had himself come to the airport to receive them, and Tamara gave him a long account of the ordeal. During their Mumbai visit, Anil's friend Commodore Jain had invited them for the New Year party at their apartment where many of the other friends from their Moscow days were also present. Much to Anil's annoyance, Tamara dominated the conversation with her tirade against the Russian customs officials.

A visit to India would be incomplete without a trip. Anil planned to visit Goa for ten days, followed by four days

each visiting friends in Bangalore, Pune and finally Delhi before departing for Moscow. All the trips were enjoyable but also punctuated with some unexpected problems that cropped up as always. A somewhat worrying experience for Anil was that he felt a touch of vertigo while climbing the hill at Gomateswara near Bangalore — something that had never happened earlier. He therefore stopped at that point itself. He also mentions some of the health problems he faced during this visit — reddening of eyes, severe cough and cold etc. He, however, did not take them seriously — a very costly mistake as it turned out later.

Anil noticed that the interactions with Tamara were no longer very cordial during these visits — minor quarrels and disagreements took place a little too often. Nevertheless, he did give her ten thousand rupees for shopping when in New Delhi, as always — and she bought a nice fur coat. As soon as they reached their Moscow apartment, Tanya dropped in for a visit. Never the one either to see them off or receive them at the airport, it was quite clear that she was visiting them only for collecting the gifts that were meant for her.

While the mother and the daughter were busy admiring the purchases, Anil quietly rang up Valentina, a colleague in the office for the last few years. They were attracted to each other, and Valentina had expressed her desire quite explicitly, but so far Anil had opted to be patient. He had by now realized that he no longer felt any attraction for

Shifting to a New Apartment

Tamara, physical or emotional. That day he had a sudden and strong desire to be with Valentina. Fortunately, she agreed immediately to meet him. She was staying in an apartment with her mother, but that evening she was all alone, and invited Anil home. Anil writes that it turned out to be a magically romantic evening. The intimate hours spent with Valentina made him feel as if he had reached a pinnacle of happiness. He experienced a feeling of exceptional and complete contentment. That night, he suddenly decided to put a complete stop to womanizing — somehow convinced that it is best to quit exactly at the moment when one is very contented, happy and peaceful. He writes that he remained true to his decision from then on.

On his return to Moscow, Anil was happy to get some very good books for translation. He translated collections of short stories of Chekov, Pushkin, and Gorky, as well as a few plays by Gorky. He was also the first one to translate some of the modern Russian plays into Marathi. A very significant accomplishment was bringing out two volumes of collections of best Russian stories published during the previous 200 years! Anil worked like a man possessed — and this was one time when he derived full satisfaction from this work.

Illness Strikes a Serious Blow

Though the new translation assignments were turning out to be an enjoyable and fulfilling experience, Anil began to feel increasingly worried about what the future had in store for him. The contract was for two more years — but what if it was not renewed this time? He had already crossed 45 years of age. Earning money was absolutely essential. He could not see any openings for himself in India. Prices of houses were skyrocketing, so he was planning to stay with his uncle and aunt. His uncle was not sure as to whether to opt for retirement and relocate to Pune — that added to the uncertainty. Jui was in college now, and Anil on his own was regularly increasing the monthly allowance for her. Luckily, so far, there was no cause for any disagreement between him and Jui. All was not well between him and Tamara though — minor bickerings were common. Friends from India visiting Moscow would drop in off and on, providing some relief from loneliness. Air India had replaced Boeing 707, so Theeba could not visit Moscow any longer.

One event that made him a little happy was that his Marathi film from 1971 was telecast on TV in Mumbai. A kind friend recorded it on a video cassette and ensured that another friend carried it to Moscow to hand it over to Anil.

A high point of 1987 was the grand celebration enthu-

Illness Strikes a Serious Blow

siastically arranged by Tamara for Anil's birthday. Igor, Anatoly, Tanya, the Abramovs were all there; so was Balasaheb Ghatnekar who was visiting Moscow. Whiskey and champagne flowed freely, and the nicely decorated house provided a very joyous ambiance. Anil also mentions being happy at being presented with a really beautiful ballpoint pen — this gift was from Mr. Choudhary, a colleague of Mr. Ghatnekar, who had carefully chosen this birthday gift for Anil the Author!

It was time for the usual annual holidays. Anil decided to go to India immediately after their already planned Georgia trip, and this time, by himself. Anil was having some health issues during these days — cough, cold, a feeling of nausea in the morning etc. On reaching Georgia, his condition worsened. He developed pain in his heels. There was also a little bit of fever. Tamara did the necessary running around, managed to contact a doctor and arranged for some medicine that did provide some temporary relief. Anil had by now stopped dancing altogether because he used to feel some pain in his left leg. He did not take any of this seriously at that time.

Coincidentally and unexpectedly, Tanya also happened to visit the same place at the same time. Though she stayed at her friend's place, the three of them could spend some quality time together — perhaps for the first time in all these years. Tanya had black eyes and black hair and looked a little too young for her age — so many people got the impression

that she was Anil's daughter. Some of the women were naturally a little more curious and Tamara explained to them that Tanya was her daughter. Anil casually remarked to a somewhat more inquisitive woman that his daughter was in India.

Inexplicably, this seemed to have greatly upset Tamara. There were very heated arguments between them — and Anil simply could not understand the reason behind this! As a result, the Georgia trip left a bitter taste in his mouth. He became very depressed; the feeling that he should go away from all this — Tamara, Moscow, everything became more and more intense. That made him start drinking more than what was good for him. To add to this, he started suffering from backache as well; the problem of painful heels had not gone away either.

The office too started creating problems exactly at this time. The *Lokvangmay Gruh* had resumed their machinations — raising trivial and absurd objections to Anil's translations, refusing to accept the already printed books; they had also stopped placing new orders. The chief, Tanya Werbiskaya and the section head, Nadja Bordukova had just filed away these letters from Mumbai for months together and raised the issues only now. The tension due to this situation became excessive. Galina, an acquaintance of Tamara, a spiritual healer who used to treat Anil with massage, suspected diabetes. Since Anil's mother had diabetes, he immediately went in for a checkup that confirmed the suspicion.

Illness Strikes a Serious Blow

He was quick to take the necessary steps to handle this: a drastic change in diet, considerable reduction in drinking. Within a month, he lost a lot of weight. His spiritual healer Galena kept on warning him that he should under no circumstance undertake traveling on his own, but he ignored the warning.

Anil's flight was booked for 7th November 1987. After the usual arguments and fights, he was allowed to travel by Air India. They added to the tension by suddenly announcing that the flight would go only up to Delhi. The evening before his departure, as Anil sat on his sofa nursing his usual drink, he began musing about his death. He felt that he was not destined to have a long life — and nor did he have any strong desire to continue living. He was tired. His dreams had been fulfilled. His only daughter was good in her studies, and was about to complete her graduation, so he did not have any burden of responsibilities on his shoulder to carry! He was not particularly afraid of death — it would have mattered very little to him in this frame of mind. He was sick of Tamara's sullen silences at home and the pettiness of colleagues at the office; and was not at all keen on returning to Moscow.

But then where would he stay in India? What would he do there? His mind was whirling with these thoughts. Looking at the collection of books he had translated, he wondered whether people would remember him as Anil Havaldar, the man who translated more than 100 Russian books into

Marathi (just as Mama Varerkar is still remembered as the man who brought many Bengali novels into Marathi). With at least 5000 copies of each of these books, more than half a million copies of his Marathi books had been printed, with the actual printing having been done outside Maharashtra — it was a really spectacular accomplishment, achieved in a span of just sixteen years!

He had no worries about Tamara — she was perfectly competent to handle herself. She had an apartment of her own, she was entitled to getting pension on reaching the age of 55, so there would be no financial worries. He would any way give away all his possessions to her. Neither his uncle, nor his aunt, nor Jui had ever expected him to bring any gifts for them — so he had no worries whatsoever on that count either. He had arrived in Moscow just with two suitcases and a handbag — and wished to leave too just with these!

He went to the airport in a taxi. Tamara had come down to see him off and continued to wave for a long time as the taxi sped away. The travel to New Delhi in the executive class was comfortable, made more so by the purser who turned out to be one of his friends. He however had to sit in the transit lounge of the New Delhi airport all through the night; the flight to Mumbai was only in the morning. Since he was planning to return just after a month and a half, he did not have much luggage — just a light suitcase and a handbag.

Illness Strikes a Serious Blow

After reaching home, he had a couple of pegs of whiskey before lunch. He would normally never sleep after lunch, but having been awake throughout the previous night, he soon fell fast asleep after lunch. When he woke up, he felt completely disoriented for a short while, unable to make out where he was. The left side of his body felt a little heavy, and as he walked to the wash basin, he felt as if he were walking in slow motion. He saw in the mirror that the left side of his face was distorted.

As he slowly came out of his room, his aunt exclaimed, "Anil, why does your face look twisted?" He replied rather indistinctly that he needed tea. His speech was a little slurred too. Fortunately, he felt much better after having a cup of tea. His speech became clear as before. He convinced himself that all this must have been because of the extreme fatigue and that he would be okay very soon once he had rested. He decided not to take this seriously and did not say anything more about it. His uncle and aunt were well aware of Anil's likes and dislikes; they too did not press him further. Luckily, he was back to his normal self by the next morning.

The next day, he withdrew a lot of money from the bank. When he visited the Lokvangmay Gruh to hand over some letters he had brought for them, they did not utter a word about his translations, much to his surprise. The day after that, Anil shifted to Theeba's flat in Juhu. Get-togethers, lunches, dinners and drinks with different friends was the

routine for the next several days. Though most enjoyable, Anil used to feel extremely tired by the end of the day. One fine morning around 7 AM, he was woken up by a phone call from his friend Lyona Abromov, who was in Mumbai for a very short visit. They decided to meet for lunch at 12 noon at his hotel in Bombay Central. For Anil, even the taxi ride from Juhu to Ghatkopar and then to Bombay Central proved to be very tiring, leaving him completely exhausted. Even Abromov noticed his fatigue and expressed his concern.

The next day morning, now in his uncle's house, Anil was reading the autobiography of Mr. Madhukar Toradmal, a famous Marathi theatre personality. When he reached the chapter where the author described about how he was stuck by an attack of paralysis, Anil began to feel very uneasy. Soon, a severe pain developed in his arms. He rang up his friend Dr. Shobhana Moghe; she advised him to immediately see a doctor. Luckily, having resided in that locality for more than two decades, Anil's uncle and aunt knew many of the neighbourhood doctors, and his aunt took him to Dr. Amrutlal Vora. While describing his own condition to the doctor, Anil started facing difficulty with his speech too. After having examined him carefully, the doctor said that he was suffering from hypertension and strongly advised that he be immediately admitted to a nursing home.

From the moment Anil entered the nearby nursing home on 16th November 1987, his life turned completely topsy

Illness Strikes a Serious Blow

turvy. He realized that the problems must have started during his visit to Georgia — and now he had to pay a very heavy price for having neglected those early signs instead of attending to them promptly. He was on a saline drip for the whole night. The next morning, the doctor slowly told him that his left hand was paralyzed. His speech also started slurring. Further tests confirmed that he had suffered a paralytic stroke due to cerebral thrombosis. Hypertension had led to the formation of two blood clots in his brain.

This very serious and painful condition necessitated a four-day stay in a nursing home. A few days after discharge, Anil's condition suddenly worsened and he had to be once again admitted to the nursing home for four more days. He felt very sorry for the hassle all this had caused for his aunt; she had already looked after Anil's mother and Anil's brother in their illnesses earlier, and Anil was sure that by now she must have been sick of all this! His uncle also used to keep awake throughout the night, looking after his wants and requirements. The problems did not end after the discharge either. Special food needed to be prepared for him separately. He also needed a western toilet and that was not available either at his uncle's house or in the nearby nursing homes.

The news of his illness quickly spread through his circle of friends, and many of them rushed to meet him. Didi (Sulochana) who found it very difficult to climb even a few steps, made it a point to visit him despite his uncle's house

being on the third floor (no lifts there). She also convinced him to shift to her flat, which he did. However, with no company of friends, he began to feel depressed there and shifted to Theeba's flat. The doctor had put a complete stop to his smoking and drinking. He had no difficulty in giving up smoking but giving up the two decades long habit of having a drink every evening caused enormous grief! He bemoaned his condition where regular intake of drinks was replaced by an even more regular gulping of tablets! By the time he managed to reconcile himself to this, another difficulty arose. Theeba had to be away from Mumbai — and his cook-cum-valet Krishna was also going on leave at that time. Anil was thus perpetually plagued by the problem of arranging for his accommodation and food.

Fortunately, his friend from school days Captain Arun Godbole and his wife Shobha Godbole rescued him from this predicament and took him to their house in Versova. He mentions with gratitude this enormous help from these two and their young children. Shobha in particular deserved a great deal of appreciation and credit; not only did she look after Anil quite cheerfully though she herself was suffering from backache but was very hospitable to the large number of visitors; many of Anil's friend used to visit him to make sure that he never felt lonely or neglected. Mr. M.R. Shah had even arranged for a phone call to be made to Tamara to apprise her of the situation.

Anil slowly realized how much this illness had affected

Illness Strikes a Serious Blow

his wellbeing. While walking on the road, he was scared of losing his balance. He was unable to tolerate the strong glare of lights or loud noises. Buttoning his shirt was a problem because his left hand was almost non-functional. In short, he was living life as an invalid. His speech was indistinct and others often found it difficult to comprehend what he was saying. Luckily, his mind was fully alert, he had not lost the ability to think clearly, and his memories were intact. He used to miss Tamara very much — and firmly believed that she was the only person who was capable of pulling him out of this sad condition and making him fully normal as before. His ticket for the return journey was already booked. Dr. Amrut Lal Vora was very confident and permitted him to travel by himself. He carried along with him enough supply of medicines to last him for one full year — Moscow always faced a severe shortage of medicines. Many of his close friends like Mr. M.P. Rao, Papa Jagirdar and Didi came to meet him before his departure.

Anil was thankful to providence that his right hand was functional. Like most people going through a crisis, he too became religious. His friend Kunda Dixit had asked him to recite the *Atharvasheersha* every day so that his speech would also improve. She also asked him to chant *Om Namah Shivaay* 108 times every day — and he faithfully followed these instructions.

By a wonderful coincidence, the Doordarshan TV started broadcasting Soviet documentaries quite regularly. For

hundreds of Soviet Documentaries handled by *Film Export* during the previous twelve years, Anil had been the narrator. Anil's voice was therefore being heard throughout Maharashtra. This was the very first time that these documentaries were being screened in Maharashtra, and many of Anil's friends could immediately recognize his voice. Listening to his own voice evoked mixed emotions in Anil's mind.

Anil's flight to New Delhi was early in the morning. Captain Theeba accompanied him to the airport and also instructed the airline staff to look after Anil. In the meanwhile, Anil himself had contacted Balasaheb Ghatnekar and managed to make all arrangements for his stay in Delhi. Everything worked out well. He even managed to buy some leather goods for Tamara. Balasaheb came to the airport to see him off. After entering, Anil had a tough time completing all the formalities that were necessary, using only one hand. The large crowds did not improve matters, and high blood pressure made it a little difficult for him to remain alert all the time.

Tamara and Anil's young friend Manoj Shivnani had come to the airport to receive Anil, and Manoj drove them to Anil's apartment. Anil felt quite relieved to be back home and was happy to be united with Tamara. The next day was New Year's Eve. He of course was not in a position to stay awake till 12 midnight, but Tamara and Tanya did observe the ritual by having a few sips of champagne at the stroke of

Illness Strikes a Serious Blow

midnight. Anil was happy that Tanya and her friend Sergey Seryoza joined them that evening. The spiritualist friend Galena was also present, and castigated Anil for not having heeded her advice of not undertaking the India trip by himself without Tamara. Anil wondered if she had an inkling of the troubles that he was going to face. He could not be sure of that, but the troubles did turn out to be very real and the blow was very severe indeed!

The New Year of 1988 arrived the next day. It was going to bring a major change in Anil's life!

Life Takes a New Turn

Throughout his 15-16 years of service in Progress and Raduga, Anil had never availed of sick leave (called Bulletin in Russian). He was any way on vacation during the time he had suffered the paralytic stroke. Now that the vacation was over, Tanya Verbitsaskaya advised him to avail of 15 days of leave, and he accepted her advice. That turned out to be a mistake! He also decided to be under the care of a doctor, to be on the safer side. The Soviet government provided free medical treatment to its citizens as well as to foreigners.

Accordingly, he arranged for the services of a doctor from Clinic No. 6. This was meant exclusively for foreigners. This turned out to be the second mistake. This clinic was full of incompetent and corrupt doctors. None of them knew any foreign language — yet pocketed the extra 20% pay that was given to doctors who knew a foreign language.

The lady doctor was a neurologist and was extremely aggressive as well. Anil had to translate all his reports from India for her. These Russian neurologists were extremely dangerous. These were the ones who had confined many intellectuals in mental asylums during the Stalin era. When the medical leave of 15 days was over, the neurologist simply refused to provide the certificate of completion. Anil would not be permitted to report for duty without that. That

Life Takes a New Turn

meant loss of pay for those many days. After a few tense days, it was Tamara who once again solved the problem. She managed to find a male neurologist who was competent and reasonable and issued the necessary certificate, and Anil was able to resume the translation work at the office once again.

About three years earlier, when there was a shortage of books to translate, Anil himself had suggested one — the collection of short stories by the renowned Estonian author Lilli Promet. This had remained incomplete. Anil took up the thread once again. Lilli Promet writes delightfully — and her themes were particularly appropriate for the “Glasnost” era. By the end of April, Anil had completed translating all the stories in the collection, entitled *A Water-colour Painting of Summer*.

Anil felt confident enough to begin taking walks. During winter, Tamara would accompany him. Afterwards, once the roads were free of snow, he started going for walks on his own. Tamara had also succeeded in bringing his diabetes totally under control by ensuring that he did not deviate at all from the prescribed diet.

The month of May brought new problems. One was the lack of adequate work at the office. To add to that, he found that Tanya Werbitsaskaya was not only uncooperative; her work was shabby too. Anil did not get properly corrected versions. Anil was more upset because this seemed sheer ingratitude. Being aware that she had blood pressure issues,

he used to extend every help; he had even dropped her home in a taxi when she suddenly began feeling unwell in the office. After a great deal of struggle, he was able to get a collection of short stories by Solokov assigned to him for translation.

Troubles do not come alone; Tamara unexpectedly started suffering from severe backache. She was unable even to walk properly. Anil had to bring all the provisions, somehow managing to hold the shopping bags in one hand; his walk used to be somewhat unsteady because of this. Tanya dropped in, but instead of helping her mother, picked up some quarrel and walked off. Anil being completely ignorant of cooking, Tamara had to somehow manage the kitchen. This sad state of affairs continued for almost a month. Luckily, Tamara's recovery was complete and she could resume her active life.

In August, Tanya and Sergey took a trip Pichunda. They were moving together now for almost eight years. They returned in September, and from that moment, Tamara became a totally different person. She started shouting at Anil during meals, began swearing at him, started speaking ill of Jui and so on and so forth. Knowing fully well that Anil found it difficult to tolerate hunger, she used to deliberately delay his meals.

Anil's health which was on the mend till then, began to deteriorate rapidly — suffering a weight loss of almost 10 kgs. Despite all this, Anil had been giving her all the money

for household expenses. Staying with her was becoming more and more unbearable for Anil. His uncle's plans of shifting to Pune had to be kept on hold — the workers in his company were on strike. Letters from his uncle and Baby used to be delayed; an exasperated Anil wrote a few angry letters — but soon realized that such outbursts of his would not accomplish anything other than making them feel hurt.

Despite the lack of adequate work for him, Anil's contract was renewed for two more years. A change in the company policy had cut down the contract period to two years; the earlier contracts used to be for a period of three years. The editor's consent was essential for contract renewal, and luckily, Tanya Werbitsaskaya did give her consent. Unfortunately, their relations deteriorated after that. Anil started making complaints against her in writing. He also succeeded in convincing Bordukova during their conversations — but no action was taken against her.

In fact, Anil's written complaints were not even allowed to reach the director. In retaliation, Tanya started complaining that the quality of Anil's translation had deteriorated. There was no work for him, the office claimed that this was due to a general shortage of funds — but decided to send the junior editor Nikolay to Pune so that he could improve his knowledge of Marathi. The huge expenditure of Nikolay's Pune trip and stay was of course going to be borne by the office. Anil managed to survive through this period

because of friends like M.P. Rao, Vijay Padhye, Gagan Patwardhan, Manoj Shivanani. They would visit him at home, ensured a steady supply of medicines, tea, coffee and biscuits from India (he found Russian biscuits absolutely inedible), and most importantly, provide the much-needed cheer and emotional support.

A favourable outcome of the contract renewal was that he could visit India during November-December. He was keen on meeting Dr. Vora to have a full check-up. In the nearby clinics in Moscow, even measuring blood pressure was not something that could be easily done. Physiotherapy was out of the question. The hand had remained stiff, exactly as it was before, with no improvement whatsoever. His arms used to ache if he slept on his side; sleeping on his back led to backache. Along with him, the office provided tickets for Tamara too. Anil completed all the necessary formalities and obtained a visa for her. He wanted to reach India only after Diwali was over so as to avoid the noise and smoke of firecrackers — something he could no longer tolerate. Tamara kept on vacillating about the dates that she would prefer — this was deliberate; she knew that this uncertainty would make him feel very harassed.

Luckily, Balasaheb Ghatnekar was visiting Moscow at that time. It was from him that he got to know the correct dates of Diwali and he postponed the date of departure from 10th November to 19th November. While all this was going on, further unpleasant surprises were in store for him.

Life Takes a New Turn

One day on returning home, he found that a sum of 100 roubles was missing from a wallet in the cupboard — an envelope with 2000 roubles next to it was untouched. There was nobody else in the house other than Tamara, and he brought this to her notice. She threw a tantrum — claiming that he had now started accusing him of having committed theft.

Without saying anything, Anil checked the pocket of the coat that was inside the cupboard and found a sum of 40 roubles there; he had not kept anything in the coat pocket. So, a sum of 60 roubles was missing — and he could see a brand-new vacuum cleaner, worth 58 roubles, kept in one corner of the room. This obviously was for Tanya; they already had a vacuum cleaner in the apartment. He could now realize how the situation was unfolding.

This was not the end of the story — but just the beginning. At night, just as he was going to bed, Tamara coldly told him, “I will not come to Mumbai with you. On the 9th of November, Sergey and Tanya are getting married. Do not mention this to Balasaheb. Just leave quietly. It has become impossible for me to stay with you. Now you have even started accusing me of stealing from you. Clearly, you have become mentally unbalanced. I am going to admit you in a mental asylum tomorrow morning. I am planning to call an ambulance for it. Before that, make sure that the apartment will be in my name henceforth”.

How could anyone sleep after hearing this? He was in a

foreign country and was practically an invalid. However, he did know the system rather well. The apartment where they were staying belonged to the office of the publication, and Tamara had been eyeing that for quite some time. However, she was not just unrealistic in her expectations — she was completely mistaken about whether such a thing could happen at all. Her plan was that once Tanya got married, she would give away her own apartment to her daughter and make sure that Anil's apartment would become her apartment. Anil knew that she was greedy by nature — but this was the limit, her taking full advantage of Anil's helplessness by threatening him with admission to a mental asylum. Once he was admitted, there would be no escape for him — based on what he knew of similar experiences that others had faced.

However, many of the laws of the Stalin era had been overthrown in this era of Glasnost. Nobody could be forcibly admitted into a mental asylum without the individual's consent. Tamara and Anil were both fully aware of this changed situation.

Anil was not one to be defeated so easily. He gave the matter very serious thought. He had any way been very sick of the ill-treatment that he was subjected to for the previous couple of months. By a stroke of luck, just the previous evening, while talking to Mrs. Shaila Dange on the phone, he had said that he may need to stay in their apartment for a few days sometime, and she had readily

Life Takes a New Turn

agreed for that. They had a large apartment and one guest would have been easily accommodated in it at any time.

He woke up early in the morning and got ready for going out. He packed his suitcase with clothes, passport, lots of roubles, air tickets and all the necessary documents and things. He rang up Balasaheb and in a hushed voice told him to bring him a taxi at the earliest and to keep the taxi waiting downstairs. He also requested him to ring up Mrs. Shaila Dange and inform her about Anil coming over to their place for a stay of a few days. Balasaheb's normal nature was to ask many questions before undertaking anything, but that day he probably guessed the seriousness of the situation, just said "Yes" and soon he was at Anil's door. Anil left the apartment with him, carrying his suitcase. A half-asleep Tamara saw him, was puzzled, and asked him what he was doing. He told her: "Many times I had told you to leave this house; today I am myself leaving this house".

Anil had thus run away from his own house. He ran away from a life that had become intolerable. He wanted to lead a good and happy life. He was also fully prepared to face any adversities. He says that even those who were very close to him had no idea as to how strong and tenacious he could be when the situation so demanded. He opted for this last resort only when his very survival was under threat. He no longer considered himself as an invalid. He was very clear in his mind about his future course of action and he was ready to start implementing his plans right away. He

was going to make Tamara leave the apartment and then return the apartment to the office. Tamara had threatened to tarnish his image in the office — and he had to put on record a complaint against her before she could begin her defamation campaign.

After establishing himself at Shailatai's house, he rang up the office at 9.30 in the morning and soon reached the office in a taxi. He handed over a written complaint against Tamara to Bardukova. She quickly grasped the situation. The office advised him to divorce Tamara at the earliest; she was still his legal wife, and the office would not be able to reclaim the apartment as long as she was there. They could get the possession and keys to the house only after the divorce was granted.

Tamara rang him up after four days. Her tone had become milder. She requested Anil to return to the house, and Anil flatly declined to do so. Of course, as expected, before that she had indeed called the office and heaped all kinds of abuses on Anil.

After twelve days, she consented to leave the apartment and hand over the keys to him. She threatened to take away all the furniture though. This was no threat for Anil as he was going to give it to her anyway. True to her word, she had taken away literally everything; only the sofa set, two beds, a table and a chair, bookshelves, fridge and TV were left. She had taken away even the chandeliers, leaving Anil to spend the night with just a single bulb in the apartment.

Life Takes a New Turn

Anil managed to continue to stay in the apartment for quite some time. His junior colleague in the office, Zinaida was most helpful during this difficult period. She agreed to prepare food for Anil. Tamara's brother Anatoli and his wife Tanya were also very supportive. Anil was also successful in getting some domestic help; luckily, in the Glasnost era, Russians had no qualms in working for foreigners, especially if the money was attractive. Thus, Anil's requirements (cooking, washing, cleaning, buying provisions, etc) were being taken care of.

Anil had prepared the plans for the office for 1990; this meant that there was enough work now for the next two years. In order to help the office, he agreed to take unpaid leave for a period of two months. He was eligible for one month's paid leave. He thus planned to spend about three months in India and explore opportunities for his future. He sent a letter to his uncle and aunt, requesting them to rent a flat for him in Pune for a period of three months.

Tamara did not agree for a divorce by mutual consent. She had no child from Anil, so as per the Soviet laws, she was not eligible for any support from Anil. She had taken away a lot of stuff. In fact, the only reason some things were left behind for Anil was because there was no place for them in her apartment. Anil was leading a very simple life. He had no regrets, and no problems in leading such a simple life. He writes that all his desires for sex, drinks, travel etc had been fully satisfied, and he was content with the simple

existence that had befallen him. He was all alone for 22 of the 24 hours but could contact others on phone. The winter had started, but Shaila tai and Raza Ali provided invaluable help to him to pull through, providing him with food and shelter.

On 18th November 1988, Lydia and her son took Anil to the airport and saw him off. The previous day, he had received a phone call from Mr. R.M. Shah. Fortunately, he too was returning to India from Moscow by the same flight and provided all the help during the journey. Anil was planning to stay with Theebaraje and had requested Shrikant Moghe to receive him at the airport — direct phone calls from Moscow to Mumbai and Delhi could now be made, though not to Pune. As he came out of the plane, he met his friend Rajan Shirur. He told him that he would be met at the airport by Captain Arun Godbole — Shrikant had made this alternative arrangement because he was unable to come to the airport. Anil felt that some invisible power was looking after his welfare.

Arun dropped him at Theeba's flat. Theeba was away, but Krishna was very much there and took good care of Anil. Anil's uncle, aunt and Jui came to meet him. The strike in his uncle's company was now withdrawn, so the plan to rent an apartment in Pune for three months had to be dropped. Anil stayed in Theeba's house for 85 days. During this time, he slowly began to consider writing his autobiography. He even came up with an appropriate title for it. He shared his

plan with Rangnath Kulkarni and Pradeep Dixit, and both of them were fully supportive of the idea.

During this time, he read about the visit of Ms Sheela bai Bappu, the minister for Marathi with the Mauritius Government. Plans were being made for establishing a Maharashtra Bhavan in Mauritius. That provided Anil with a clear plan for his future. He wanted to become the Public Relations Officer for Maharashtra Bhavan in Mauritius. He could feel that his stay in Moscow was coming to a close. He decided that his future work would be towards propagation of the Marathi language in Mauritius.

It was now already 1989. Dr. Vora had prescribed new medicines. Dr. Shobhana Moghe arranged for a physiotherapist, Dr. Farida Khalifa whose expert treatment provided considerable relief to Anil's hand. She had recommended some exercises as well. Anil regularly performed those and also took regular walks on Juhu beach in the morning as well as in the evening which did lead to some improvement in his health. He felt very confident and optimistic about the future. He was also happy to realize that his financial situation was sound — he was able to handle all the expenditure on medical treatment and medicines quite comfortably.

After spending some pleasant days in Delhi with friends, Anil left for Moscow. The first item on his agenda was divorcing Tamara. His contract was till July 1990 and he found that very reassuring and expected to sail through the next 18 months fairly smoothly.

Divorce, Resignation and Goodbye to Moscow

The three months spent in Mumbai were very beneficial to Anil. His health had improved. He also had the peace of mind to ponder about the recent upheavals in his life. He was ready to begin preparations for his return to India for good. Tamara had also developed a better understanding of the situation. She had finally realized and accepted the fact that Anil no longer wanted her in his life. When Anil telephoned her from Mumbai to greet her on her birthday, the conversation went off normally.

Lydia Adamovana (Tamara's friend and so Anil's as well) and her thirty-year-old son Igor had come to receive Anil at the airport, but without their car; Russian citizens are generally very reluctant to drive in winter, so a taxi was needed. One of the well-known visible effects of Glasnost was a blatant disregard for rules — taxi drivers often refused to take passengers, or demanded exorbitant amounts, several times the legal fare. Anil had deliberately kept a transparent polythene bag in his hand, and a carton of Dunhill cigarettes inside it was clearly visible; he was well-aware of how much this brand was sought after by Russians. His ploy was successful — he was approached by a taxi driver who offered to take him to his destination in exchange for

Divorce, Resignation and Goodbye to Moscow

half a carton. Anil gave the other half to Lydia, who too was quite fond of them.

The biggest problem for Anil was getting someone reliable to work for him as a domestic help. He tried out seven of them during that year. Some left because they got much better paying jobs; others Anil had to let go either because they stole some items from his apartment or swindled him by producing inflated bills. He very gratefully writes that it was only because of the constant, unstinting and cheerful support of friends like Lydia, Zinaida, Anatoly and his wife Tanya throughout this period that he managed to pull through.

He once again talked to Tamara on phone about the divorce, and this time she finally gave her consent. As per Russian law, they need to sign the papers twice, with a gap of three months in between. The first signing was on 22nd February 1989 and the next on 24th May 1989; their divorce was now official. On that day itself, Tamara told Anil once again that she was still willing to stay with him as his wife. She also opted to continue to use Havaladar as her surname even after divorce; the Russian law permits them to do so.

Anil could fully understand her feelings. He could make out that this was the earlier, good natured, affectionate Tamara who genuinely wanted a reconciliation. He, however, was not in a position to turn back the clock. There was once again shortage of work, and there were already

indications that sooner or later, he would have to return to India for good. No useful purpose would be served by their becoming emotionally involved with each other at this stage. He was able to convince her of this during the taxi ride when he dropped her at her place. There was now no bitterness or hard feelings between them. The temporary phase of enmity was over, and feeling of friendship, affection and love for each other was restored.

In the month of April, his Armenian friend from Yerevan told him on the phone that Tamara's daughter Tanya had delivered a baby boy; Tamara had now become a grandmother — the third fulfilling phase in a woman's life. Anil could now figure out as to why Tamara had suddenly become terribly upset in the month of September; she must have come to know about Tanya having become pregnant at that time. Tanya's wedding had not yet taken place, and Tamara must have become desperate, trying to make her own apartment ready for Tanya and her baby! It was during the month of April itself that his uncle was finally able to buy a new flat in Pune.

Anil was now assured of a place for him to stay on his return to India. He then started winding up things by sending a few things (like his dictionaries) through his visiting friends to India. The Apte family had decided to settle down in Moscow — so he gifted his full collection of children's books to their young daughters. He also very wisely sold his furniture, refrigerator etc. to his neighbors at rather

Divorce, Resignation and Goodbye to Moscow

low prices — with the understanding that they would pay money to him in advance, and that he could continue to use these things till the day of his actual departure. He had a lot of roubles that had to be spent in Moscow itself, and he used that money to make his (and his friends') life comfortable. For example, Zinouda's elder son was a taxi driver, and Anil would often hire his taxi for the whole day.

Anil has also described the many changes that were taking place in the lives of his Russian and Indian friends. They continued coming over to meet him off and on, and he could now enjoy a peg of whiskey (only one!) with them, and the next couple of months went off rather well for him.

Things started going wrong from the morning of 24th June 1989 itself as often happened on his birthdays. His cook informed him that she would not be able to come to his apartment because one of her relatives had suffered an accident. His TV set went out of order on the same day. He could not contact anyone else till late evening — and he had to be alone at home for the whole day, in a depressed state of mind. Finally, by 9 PM, he could contact Tamara's brother Anatoly; he and his wife Tanya drove all the way from their place that was thirty kilometers away, and Tanya cooked dinner for him. He just had one small drink to celebrate his birthday — that was going to turn out to be his last birthday in Moscow.

July happened to be a very eventful month at the office. He completed the translation of the science fiction *Horse-*

riders from the Unknown, authored by the Abramov brothers. He also drafted the work-plan for the office for the period up to 1991. Nothing else had been assigned to him by the Raduga office. Now that he was assured of a place to stay in Pune, he was ready to leave any time. So, one day when Bordukova made some derogatory comments about Anil's slow speed of working, he immediately tendered his resignation. Both Bordukova and Werbitskaya were shocked by this sudden and totally unexpected response from him; they did not know what to say. The Chief Editor of Raduga, Mr. Valentin Anosov, however, understood the situation, and extended his support to Anil.

For the translations carried out by Anil for Raduga, a payment to the tune of a few thousand roubles was still pending, and he estimated that all the formalities would be completed by 1st November; so, he booked his ticket for the Air India flight for 13th November 1989. Because of "Perestroika", the nonprofit Raduga had become a commercial/corporate entity that was running profitably and Anil was pleasantly surprised when the compensation he received turned out to be much higher than what he was accustomed to or expected.

On the 1st of November, Werbitskaya sprang an unpleasant surprise; Anil was shocked to hear from her she had decided to reject two of the books that Anil had translated, citing "poor quality of translation" as a reason. She was clearly being vindictive; in fact, this was a conspiracy

Divorce, Resignation and Goodbye to Moscow

hatched by her and Bordukova about four months ago. Unknown to Anil, they had sent photocopies of the manuscripts of his translations to Mumbai to a retired journalist and had managed to obtain scathingly negative reports. She now used this as a reason for denying Anil the payment for the translation of these two books. Anil did not give a damn for the nonpayment part, but he was upset, angry and hurt by the machinations of these two women. It was not as if they did not realize the extent of their wrongdoing; Werbitsaskaya just avoided facing Anil, this was not an option for Bordukova, she being the head of the Marathi section.

Anil agreed to their demands and went through the two manuscripts once again, and corrected the few minor errors that he noticed. According to him, 'Fairytale from Baltic' was really good, but the other book, 'Three Fatsos' was itself an example of the poor-quality books that Communist literature was replete with. Bordukova took a long time to make up her mind but rang up Anil just two days prior to his departure and informed him that the books were now acceptable and promised that the payment would be made to him by their Mumbai office, in rupees, by a cheque; he took the promise at face value.

Over and above the bonuses and additional bonuses that Anil was entitled to, the office also made a special payment of 1000 roubles to Anil in cash, on account of his having resigned voluntarily; he thought that they were just making a conciliatory gesture. The cash in roubles was not going

to be of any use to him and he decided to give that money to Tamara. He also declined to attend the farewell party that the office wanted to organize; he was in no mood to listen to boring speeches and was unwilling to pretend to be cordial when he had no such feelings for the people in the office. Bordukova made the face-saving gesture by asking if she could at least see him off at the airport, and he consented despite his reluctance.

Igor and his wife Olga hosted a dinner for him the evening before his departure; this was as per the old Russian belief that such a dinner ensures that Anil would visit Moscow again. Marina Blagonaravova from Novosti and Keera Pataki from Radio Moscow were the two other guests.

On the day of his departure, he rang up Tamara so that they could part on a somewhat happy note. She invited him to her place for lunch. Their close Armenian friends from Yerevan had flown all the way from there to see Anil off, though they had to buy air tickets in black market at exorbitant prices. Unfortunately, they could just meet Anil for lunch at Tamara's place, they could not actually see him off at the airport because their return flight was in the evening while Anil's flight was at night. Anil was overwhelmed by their affection.

The lunch was an emotional affair. All of them had a drink of the high-quality whiskey appropriately named "Something Special". Tamara could not control her tears when Anil handed over to her the envelope with one thousand

Divorce, Resignation and Goodbye to Moscow

roubles. Tamara, Bordukova and Zinaida had accompanied Anil to the airport. The Glasnost effect was quite evident; there was chaos at the crowded airport. There were long lines of unruly people in front of the luggage counter. The ever-competent Tamara somehow pushed through the crowds and took Anil to Customs.

Luckily, the formalities there were completed quickly. Mr. Makarov, the Chief of the Foreign Division of Anil's office and Tamara could accompany Anil right up to the Immigration gate. Tamara stood just behind him. As soon as the Immigration Officer handed back Anil's passport to him and pushed aside the bar for Anil to enter, Tamara burst into tears. Letting go of Anil's hand, she turned her back, resolutely strode away, walked quickly for some distance, turned back and waved a final goodbye!

Anil started walking mechanically towards the plane. His mind was numb. The most important, but tempestuous phase of his life had come to an end!

Back Home

Anil landed in Mumbai on the day of Pandit Nehru's birth centenary, 14th November 1989. The luggage was just two suitcases and a handbag — exactly what he had with him when he had left for Moscow for the first time.

As promised, Mrs. Kunda Kanhere (wife of Anil's purser friend Subhash Kanhere), had come to meet him. She was the one who had provided a great deal of emotional support to him during the 'stroke' days. She was also a serious student of Astrology. During his theater and film days, Anil too used to be attracted by Astrology, like most others in those fields; he had lost interest after going to Moscow, but it resurfaced after suffering a stroke. In 1982 itself, Kunda had examined Anil's horoscope and had told him that he was going to return to India for good sometime between 1987-1989 — and this prophecy had indeed come true!

He stayed with Theeba for a few days as always. Jui came to visit him. She had completed B.A. with French and had stood third in the University. After working for some time as a teacher in a school in Thane, she had left the job and had enrolled for M.A. He started finalizing his plans for visiting Mauritius with Jui, who would be his interpreter there since French was the official language there.

He spent a couple of days with Didi. Her daughter Kan-chan was happy to present him with a copy of her much-

acclaimed book “Nath ha Maaza”, about her late husband, Dr. Kashinath Ghanekar.

Anil next flew to Pune with Jui. He was happy with his uncle's new spacious flat — with a specially designed separate room for Anil. His aunt was her usual enthusiastic self. Anil also contacted his friend Mr. M.P. Rao, formerly of Thermax. He, and Mr. R.D. Aga, the current Chairman and Managing Director of Thermax, also a friend of Anil's, were most cordial and helpful — and immediately appointed Anil as a “Consultant” in their International Division for one year. Anil is full of praise for the affection and wholehearted support that he received from these friends during his difficult days. Thanks to them, he was able to establish himself quickly in Pune. The first year thus passed very happily for him.

Anil quickly renewed contacts with his old friends. To his pleasant surprise, he discovered that his old friend Anil Patki's house was nearby. Through him, he reestablished his contacts with the friendly and helpful couple, Satish and Madhura Chuneekar. Luckily, their new apartment was also very close to Anil's. Yet another friend, Mr. Eknath Bagul was now an Assistant Editor in the Pune Daily *Sakal*. Anil the writer had also become active again — half a dozen articles on Russia were ready in a short time. While he was still in Moscow, he had formulated a plan for a book. He had noticed many Indian commercial travelers visiting Russia from time to time.

However, most of them were put to great inconvenience because of their lack of knowledge of the Russian language. Imagining them to be the potential users, he prepared a small but useful book, almost like a dictionary. Written in English, and appropriately titled “While you are in Russia” was soon ready. Anil’s handwriting was not too good, and Madhura, whose handwriting was excellent, enthusiastically accepted the responsibility of preparing the “press copy”.

As 1990 dawned, Anil started his preparations for the Mauritius trip. Jui had to drop out at the last minute because the dates clashed with those of her examinations. He contacted Mr. Madhav Gadkari, the editor of Loksatta and appraised him of his plans. Mr. Gadkari was very enthusiastic and expressed his full support, providing Anil with some contacts in Mauritius. He also suggested that Anil should write a couple of articles about Mauritius for Loksattta after his return. Through his old acquaintance Mr. P. S. Nerurkar, a well-known authority on Mauritius, he could even get the residence phone number of Mr. Homrajen Gauria, the president of the Literary Society there, the *Mauritius Marathi Sahitya Parishad*. He got some more contacts from Ashok Jagirdar (Papa’s son) and his wife Madhavi.

Anil had only moderate expectations about the success of this trip. He was treating this as a purely exploratory visit. His experience of Moscow had made him rather cautious and he had chosen to tread carefully. He had taken the

Back Home

precaution of entrusting all the arrangements of this trip to a travel agency. It is only after getting to know the place and the people would he decide about his future plans. He also wanted to get an idea about how well he would be able manage on his own in travel and stay in a place that was totally new to him. The one thing he was keen on doing was meeting the Mauritius minister for Marathi, Mrs. Sheelabai Bappu.

He had difficulties from the very beginning itself. He was going to Mumbai by train, and Madhura had come to see him off. When it was time to board the train, he was horrified to discover that he was simply unable to move on his own; he managed it with Madhura's help. The crowds had made him very uncomfortable. Once inside the coach, the fellow passengers helped him throughout the journey and also helped him to get down at Dadar station. He could reach the taxi only with the help of a porter. He decided then and there that all his travels henceforth would only be by air.

The Air Mauritius flight was early on the morning of 24th January 1990. He had to reach the airport at 2.30 a.m. and had to pay an exorbitant fare for the taxi. A feeling of utter loneliness overcame him as the plane left for the six-and-a-half-hour flight to Port Louis, the capital of Mauritius.

Mauritius

On landing, the passport officer quizzed Anil in detail about his affiliations because his occupation was listed as “Journalist”; Anil told him that he had come there only as a tourist. Someone from the staff of the travel agency was there with the placard to receive him, as he came to know from the announcement on the public address system. They drove to Hotel Kalamar, situated at a picturesque location, rather far away from Port Louis. The arrangements were excellent and the scenery visible from there was beautiful. He remembered and missed Tamara very much whenever he saw any beautiful place; there were many memories of sightseeing tours with Tamara!

He began his work immediately by booking an appointment with the Indian High Commissioner Dr. Amod Parasnis for the next morning. He turned out to be a very pleasant, cultured and erudite person, and promised to arrange an appointment with the minister soon. He spoke excellent Marathi and Anil presented him with a copy of one of his translated books. He also shared the videocassette of his film *Donhee Gharacha Pahuna*.

After spending a couple of days very pleasantly at Hotel Kalamar, he shifted to Hotel Continental in Port Louis. Mr. Hemrajen Gauria, the president of the Sahitya Parishad, turned out to be a young man, who taught Marathi in a

school but was an active office bearer of many organizations. Anil realized soon that he and others were more accustomed to interacting with visitors affiliated with some organization, holding some official position, and were not sure of how best they should deal with a freelancer like Anil. Dr. Parasnis had arranged for him to meet the minister on 29th January at 1 PM. The taxi driver who took Anil to the minister's office turned out to be a very good man. Looking at the difficulty Anil had while walking, he came with Anil right up to the office and also promised to wait for him till the appointment was over. Anil found it quite difficult to climb up several flights of stairs.

For a change, the meeting with the minister went off very well. Anil was ready with recommendation letters from the offices from Moscow. He also had letters of introduction from Didi, and Mr. Mukundrao Kirloskar, establishing his bonafides as an actor and as a writer. The minister was delighted when he expressed his desire to work for Maharashtra Bhavan. She immediately telephoned Mr. Mallu, the first secretary of the department that dealt with the Maharashtra Bhavan project and told him that she would be sending Anil to meet him. She also told Anil that he had timed his visit perfectly; the International Marathi Conference was going to be held in Mauritius in 1991.

Anil gave her a copy of his translation of *Folk Tales from Ukraine* (she had mentioned it was Mr. Gauria who was her daughters' Marathi teacher) and told her that the video-

cassette of his film would be given to her by Mr. Parasnis. She then told one of her staff members to accompany Anil to Mr. Mallu. Anil gave her his home address in Pune and took leave of her, both of them saying “Namaskar” to each other. The meeting lasted all of ten minutes, but Anil felt that it had been very useful.

The meeting with Mr. Mallu was unfortunately rather disappointing. He explained to Anil the ground realities. The budget for Maharashtra Bhavan was Rs. One crore. The Chief Minister of Maharashtra, Mr. Sharad Pawar had in fact announced that his government would provide a grant of Rs. Twenty-five lakhs. However, due to the red tape culture prevalent in both the countries, the conversion of this sanctioned amount into Mauritian currency had still not taken place. The project was thus stuck because of lack of funds. The taxi driver, the good person that he was, had patiently waited for Anil all along. He neither complained, nor asked for any extra money. He in fact was happy when Anil told him that the meetings had gone well. Anil compensated him very handsomely. Over the next couple of days, Anil could meet several people whose names were suggested to him by his friends in Mumbai, and all of them were cordial and hospitable. Anil was also happy at the weather in Mauritius, but as he left for India, he was not at all sure whether Mauritius is where his future lay.

Settling Down in Pune

Immediately after returning to Pune, Anil started on the article for Loksatta about his Mauritius visit. It was eventually published in the beginning of March, under the title *Seven days in Mauritius*. Articles about Russia followed in due course. *The Russian Woman* was published in the March issue of the magazine *Stree*, on the occasion of International Women's Day. Articles with titles *Family Life in Russia*, *Orphanages in Russia*, *Religious Freedom in Russia* were published in *Stree* and *Kirloskar* between June and August 1990.

Help from Mr. M.P. Rao once again turned out to be crucial for bringing out the book *While you are in Russia*. After some discussions, by the end of April, Mrs. Jyotsna Bhide accepted the book for publication. The plan was to release it on Anil's birthday in June, but the usual and unavoidable delays pushed the date to 10th August. The beautifully brought out book quickly became popular; 1700 copies were sold within a month — Anil's first successful venture after returning to India.

Anil's stay in Pune was turning out to be pleasant. He used to take morning walks quite regularly. On the way back, he would occasionally drop in to meet his friend Anil Patki for a cup of tea and for a chat with his wife Shobha and their sons Sameer and Tushar. Anil remem-

bered Shobha from their college days — she was one of those beautiful girls who used to stay in the posh locality (Deccan gymkhana) and of the few who used to drive their own Ambassador cars. She was Ms. Shobha Deshmukh then; now she had become Mrs. Shobha Patki, renowned painter and actress, because of her innate talents. Anil Patki too continued to remain cheerful and good natured, despite having to suffer some setbacks in life.

Another great advantage was food. Anil's aunt Baby's cooking was exactly like his mother's. Having home food, that too prepared by her led to a very rapid improvement in his health. He was able to lead a very peaceful life after a very long time — free of any worries, hassles, responsibilities. Reading new Marathi books, watching new Marathi films on video cassettes, going for a walk in the evening, dropping into Madhura and Satish's house once in a while for an enjoyable peg or two of whiskey, wining and dining in some good restaurant once or twice a month with Mr. M. P. Rao — this is how he has described his happy days.

Anil started writing his autobiography *Mulkhawegla* on 3rd July. A week before that, he had a chance to meet the very famous Marathi author Mr. Shivaji Sawant (his book *Mrityunjay* being an all-time classic) and he had promised to find him a publisher — and he did keep his promise. Mr. Suresh Joshi of Suvarna Prakashan and Anil had some initial discussions on phone. Since it was difficult for Anil to go to his office located in the midst of a very crowded

Settling Down in Pune

locality, Mr. Suresh Joshi himself came to meet Anil. In the meanwhile, Madhura had made a fair copy of the first two chapters, and he took them along.

Anil is full of appreciation for and gratitude to this young couple. Madhura would accompany him wherever he went and hold his hand when crossing the road. Though Satish was busy with his job, he always found time to be with Anil, and for bringing many of the things that Anil needed. Their friends became his friends. Life became full of joy once again. Satish and Madhura used to burn midnight oil to make fair copies of the chapters of the book, successfully decoding Anil's handwriting. They of course were the very first readers of his book, and both of them also made many valuable suggestions. Mr. Joshi returned after two weeks. He liked Anil's writing. He accepted the book for publication. Anil now felt that he was slowly becoming a "Punekar" — an authentic resident of Pune.

Na Pasashok

The Russian word “Na Pasashok” means “One for the Road” — the last sip. Anil has written that he feels as if his new life had just begun! The decade would end soon, the century itself would end after ten years. He was already looking forward to the 21st century; trying to be ahead of times was his motto. His pessimism had vanished; his mind was free of the fog of despondency that had enveloped it during the previous couple of years. His friends were now used to his somewhat stuttered speech. Though his acting career as an actor was over, that as a writer was far from over. The books that he had translated from Russian into Marathi just before leaving Moscow were expected to reach Maharashtra by 1992. The work plan that he had prepared in Moscow meant that there were openings for at least two Marathi translators in that office. He was happy at the quality of the Marathi films that were being produced, at the way new directors and artists were keeping pace with the changing times. He was excited at the news that the first Marathi Cinemascope film was likely to be released soon. In the meanwhile, he had completed writing the script for a new film — one where there are many underwater scenes. He has also written a love story, aimed at adolescents.

There had been no communication from Mauritius till then. Mr. Valentin Anisov had written to him, hoping that

they would be able to meet each other “at an appropriate time”. In the meanwhile, his own apartment (500 sq feet area) at *Kalagram* was likely to be completed by 1992. He was also likely to get opportunities for jobs connected with exporting goods to Russia. Forever in search of something new, he was looking forward to entering this new field.

Reposez en Paix Baba!

Unfortunately, his optimism after his return to India was not supported by the harsh realities of life. The apartment at Kalagram did not materialize, partly due to paucity of funds and partly due to governmental delays. Due to financial constraints, Baba's uncle and aunt had to sell their 2-bedroom apartment to move into a smaller one and as a result, arrangements were made by them in coordination with me, for Baba to move into a facility for the aged, where he had a room to himself. The food there did not suit him at all. This was a far cry from the life that he had led in Moscow and he kept hoping that circumstances would once again take him to distant lands, to pursue a new career. But ill health, loneliness, lack of income, dwindling savings all took their toll and at the age of 57, on the morning of 15th December 1998 (which incidentally was my mother's birthday) Baba passed away due to a cardiac arrest. He had never imagined that in this case, the term *Mulkhawegla* would be applicable as he was away from home and family in his last moments!

He was a man much ahead of his times in terms of his thought process and it is indeed a pity that he never did see the end of the decade nor the 21st century. He was a multi-faceted, multi-talented artistic individual who shone bright as a star during a golden period but faded out when the planets did not support him anymore. Reposez en Paix

Reposez en Paix Baba!

Baba... Rest in Peace!

Jui Dabir

List of Anil Havaladar's Translations

All the books are downloadable from the link

<https://archive.org/details/@mir-titles>

1. युस्सिकेचे सात मित्र - सिल्वी व्याल्याल (Seven Friends Of Yusike In Marathi by Silvi Vyalal)
2. शूर मुंगळा - लोककथा - तात्याना मकारोवा (The Brave Ant In Marathi by Tatyana Makarova)
3. चतुर कोंबडा - विक्रम वाहदारीव (The Cock With Crimson Comb A Karelian Fairy Tale In Marathi by Victor Vazhdayev)
4. गलबतांच्या नवलकथा - स्यातोस्लाव सार्वानोव (Ships Go Sailing On The Seas In Marathi by Svyatoslav Sakharov)
5. अडाणी अस्वल - आग्रिया बार्तो (The Bear Cub With Bad Manners In Marathi by Agnia Barto)
6. छोटे शेंदरी फुल - सर्गेई अक्सासोव (Little Red Flowers In Marathi by Sergei Aksasov)
7. कोण कसा जगतो - येवगेनी चारुशिन (How They Live In Marathi Progress by Yevgeny Charushin)
8. दुर्बीणीची गोष्ट - पावेल क्लुशान्तसेव (All About The Telescope In Marathi by Pavel Klushantsev)

List of Anil Havaladar's Translations

9. गरम बर्फ - युरी बोंदारेव (Hot Snow In Marathi by Yuri Bondarev)
10. माझे पहिले प्राणिशास्त्र - येवगेनी चारुशिन (My Animal Book In Marathi by Yevgeny Charushin)
11. खिशातला कुत्रा - हेल्यो म्यांद (A Dog In My Pocket In Marathi by Helju Mänd)
12. गणारे पीस - वासिली सुखोम्लिंस्की (The Singing Feather In Marathi by Vasily Sukhomlinsky)
13. धनगराचा कुत्रा - कातुम तांग्रीकुलीयेव (The Boy And The Camel In Marathi by Kayum Tangrykuliev)
14. लाल टेकडी - विताली बिआंकी (The Red Hill In Marathi by Vitaly Bianki)
15. चांगली रीत, भांडण कधी करू नये! - सामुईल मार्शाक (Good Manners, One Should Never Fight in Marathi by Samuil Marshak)
16. कणीस (Ear Of Corn Ukrainian Folk Tale In Marathi)
17. माझे अस्वल - झिनेदा अलेक्सान्द्रोवा (My Bear In Marathi by Zinaida Alexandrova)
18. पहिले शिकार - विताली बिआंकी (First Hunt In Marathi by Vitali Bianki)

19. विस्कटलेला चिमणा - कॉन्स्तन्तिन पाउस्तोवस्की (The Ruffled Sparrow In Marathi by Konstantin Paustovsky)
20. पिज्यातले पिटकुले - सॅम्युइल मार्शाक (Babies Of The Zoo In Marathi by Samuil Marshak)
21. शेकोटीपासून अणुभट्टीपर्यंत - अलेक्सेय क्रीलोव (From The Bonfire To The Reactor In Marathi by Alexei Krylov)
22. एका अस्सल माणसाची कहाणी - बोरीस पलेवोय (Story Of A Real Man In Marathi by Boris Polevoi)
23. शांत इथे पहाटवेळा - बोरीस वासिलिएव्ह (Dawns Are Quiet Here In Marathi by Boris Vassilyev)
24. आलीस्का - यूलीया द्रुनिना (Alice In Marathi by Yulia Drunina)
25. चला जाऊ बालवाडीला! - नदेज्दा कालीनिना (Going To Kindergarten In Marathi by Nadezhda Kalinina)
26. सोयरीक - वासिली शुकशीन (Stories In Marathi by Vasily Shukshin)
27. आशावादी शोकांतिका - तीन अंकी नाटक - व्सेवोलोद विश्नेवस्की (An Optimistic Tragedy A Play In Marathi by V. Vishnevsky)
28. मित्रमंडळी - आंद्रेई नेक्रासोव (Friends in Marathi by Andrei Nekrasov)

List of Anil Havaladar's Translations

29. सुरस प्राणी-कथा - प्योत्र मान्तेयफेल (Tales Of A Naturalist In Marathi by Pyotr Manteufel)
30. अग्निदिव्य (दोन भागांमधील कादंबरी) भाग पहिला - निकोलाय अस्ट्रोवस्की (How Steel Was Tempered Part 1 In Marathi by Nikolai Ostrovsky)
31. अग्निदिव्य (दोन भागांमधील कादंबरी) भाग दुसरा - निकोलाय अस्ट्रोवस्की (How Steel Was Tempered Part 2 In Marathi by Nikolai Ostrovsky)
32. तीन कादंबरीका - चिंगिज ऐन्मातोव (Three Novellas In Marathi by Chinghiz Aitmatov)
33. ऑक्टोबरचे पहिले दिवस - व्लादिमीर बाँच-ब्रूयेविच (The First Days Of The October Revolution In Marathi by Vladimir Bonch-Bruevich)
34. सुर्य तुझाच आहे! - युरी आवेरेन्कोव (Whose Is The Sun? In Marathi by Yuri Averenkov)
35. पानोपानी प्राणीच प्राणी - व्लादिमीर मायाकोव्स्की (A Book full Of Beasts In Marathi by Vladimir Mayakovsky)
36. प्रवासी बेडकी - व्सेवॅलद गार्शिन (The Frog Went Traveling In Marathi by V. Garshin)
37. जगाला हदरवलेले दहा दिवस - जॉन रीड (Ten Days That Shook The World In Marathi by John Reed)

38. नाटके - माक्सिम गोर्की (Plays In Marathi by Maxim Gorky)
39. साहित्य आणि कला - माक्सिम गोर्की (On Art And Literature In Marathi by Maxim Gorky)
40. जामील्या - कादंबरीका - चिंघिझ आयत्मातोव (Jamila A Novella In Marathi by Chinghiz Aitmatov)
41. माझी विद्यापीठे - माक्सिम गोर्की (My Universities In Marathi by Maxim Gorky)
42. सोविएत चित्रपट - व्लादिमीर बस्काकोव (Soviet Cinema In Marathi by V. Baskakov)
43. रशियन कथाभाग १ (Anthology of Russian Short Stories In 2 Vols. Vol. 1 Classics of Russian Literature In Marathi)
44. रशियन कथाभाग २ (Anthology of Russian Short Stories In 2 Vols. Vol. 2 Classics of Russian Literature In Marathi)
45. बालपण - माक्सिम गोर्की (My Childhood In Marathi by Maxim Gorky)
46. श्वेतरात्री - फ्योदर दस्तोयेवस्की (White Nights In Marathi by Fyodor Dostoyevsky)
47. "संस्कृतीच्या मिरासदारांनो" तुम्ही कोणाबरोबर आहांत? - माक्सिम गोर्की (Literature And Art in Marathi by Maxim Gorky)

List of Anil Havaladar's Translations

48. शापित संगीत - कथासंग्रह - ल्येव तल्स्तोय (Collected Stories In Marathi by Lev Tolstoy)
49. देनिसच्या गोष्टी - वित्तर द्रागून्स्की (Stories Of Dennis In Marathi by Victor Dragunsky)
50. दोन भाऊ - अर्कादी गैदर (Chuck And Gek in Marathi by Arkady Gaidar)
51. लोकांनी पृथ्वीचा आकार कसा शोधला - आनातोली तोमीलीन (How Did We Find About The Shape Of The Earth Marathi by Anatoly Tomilin)
52. माणूस महाबलाढ्य कसा बनला - मि. इल्यिन; ये. सेगाल (How Man Became A Giant In Marathi by M. Ilyin; Ye. Segal)
53. घड्याळांच्या गंमती - याकोव दलूगोलेन्स्की (Clocks And Watches Marathi by Yakov Dlugolensky)
54. मुलखावेगळा - अनिल हवालदार (Mulkhawegla In Marathi by Anil Havaladar)